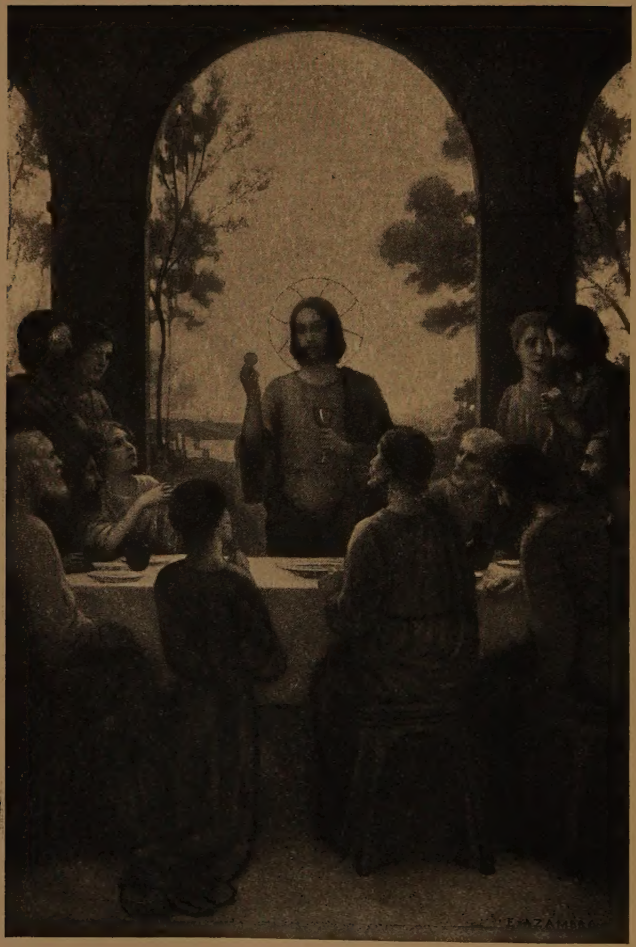
The King's Table

Dec. 25, 1912.

To L. Gilloley,
Member of St. Otto's Choir, from
Fr. Rauch.



"TAKE YE AND EAT!"

THE KING'S TABLE

Papers on Frequent Communion

BY

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To

Peerless Mary's Son,

the Ever-Reigning King,

Who has Prepared

Against Them that Afflict Us

a Royal Table Where

like Mephiboseth

We may Eat Bread

Always.

FOREWORD

To readers of THE MESSENGER OF THE SACRED HEART many of the papers here gathered together are familiar. Some, however, are new. While addressed chiefly to daily communicants, actual or prospective, the following pages, it is hoped, will assist the devotion of those also who come more rarely to the King's Table.

W. D., S.J.

Our Lady's Birthday, 1912.

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THE KING'S TABLE

IT is related in the Second Book of Kings that when David's wars were over, all his enemies reduced to submission, and his throne firmly established, he one day called to him a courtier named Siba and asked:

"Is there any one left of the house of Saul?"

And Siba said to the king: "There is a son of Jonathan left who is lame of his feet."

"What made him lame?" the king, we may imagine, then inquired.

"The nurse who had him in her arms when the news came of the death in battle of Saul and Jonathan was so startled by the sad tidings that she let Mephiboseth fall, and he has been lame in both feet ever since."

"I must see this last descendant of the line of Saul," King David may have remarked. "Bring him here to-morrow, Siba."

Mephiboseth, however, on receiving from Siba the royal command is in great consternation. Though he has no ambition to be a pretender to the throne of Israel, and only wishes to pass his life in peace and retirement, he is well aware that some malcontents, if

they dared, would set him up as king against David.

"I am summoned to court to be tried for treason," reflects Mephiboseth, "and my conviction is a foregone conclusion, for, though I am only a helpless cripple, my grandfather's enemy will take care that by my death the hopes of disaffected subjects are completely quenched."

So Mephiboseth sadly sets his house in order, bids his friends farewell, enters his litter, and on being carried into David's presence casts himself on his face at the king's feet and cries out despairingly: "Behold thy servant!"

But David, much to the suppliant's amazement, steps down from his golden throne, lifts up the trembling cripple, and, leading him to a seat of honor, banishes all his fears with the comforting words:

"Fear not, Mephiboseth, I will show you mercy for Jonathan, your father's sake. I will restore to you the lands of Saul, your grandfather, and you shall eat bread at my table always."

Upon this Mephiboseth doubtless asks in wondering gratitude:

"What have I done to be so highly honored

as this? That your Majesty should spare my life was more than I hoped for. What, then, shall I say when you as much as make me your son by thus seating me every day for the rest of my life at your table?"

"So Mephiboseth," we read, "dwelt in Jerusalem, because he ate always of the king's table." Amid all the pomp and splendor and magnificence of an oriental court at the height of its glory, Mephiboseth, the cripple, fared sumptuously every day on the costly wines and rich dishes with which the king's table was laden.

Now, dining always with the king was no doubt considered by Mephiboseth a great privilege, and perhaps we may envy him a little that distinction. But have not we a higher privilege? Did not the King's Prime Minister, Pius X, in that famous letter he sent us on daily Communion invite us also to sit always, like Mephiboseth, at the King's table? Have we accepted the invitation yet? Have we even had the courtesy to acknowledge it by giving the matter some consideration?

If one of us were to receive by to-morrow's mail an envelope bearing the seal of the royal arms of Spain or Austria, and found on eagerly reading the letter that it was an invi-

tation to dine at the Escorial or at the Hofburg, we should doubtless acknowledge at once the gracious invitation, and should then make preparations to be on hand, if we possibly could, the day of the dinner. Or suppose that the Holy Father should set aside for our sake the rigid etiquette of his court and permit us to take breakfast with him after we had assisted at the Mass of His Holiness and received Communion from his hand. Should we think that any greater honor could ever be shown us? Would the least happening of that eventful morning ever fade from our memory? Yet, after all, though we sat indeed at a king's table, it was for once only, and the king was a man just as human as we are, whereas by the Pope's letter the sovereign who invites us to sit at His table is none other than Jesus Christ Himself, God omnipotent, and Heaven's Eternal King.

Nor is the invitation to one dinner only, or for just one day, but "always," for every day, for as long as we live. Royal banquets, as a rule, while sumptuous, are rare. Even that type of Holy Communion, the great feast of King Assuerus, which lasted one hundred and four score days, came at length to an end. The royal banquet of Christ, how-

ever, is ready constantly, and until heaven and earth pass away will be spread daily for His guests. Our Lord invites, moreover, to this feast not only the rich, the noble and the powerful, as King Assuerus' guests were for the most part, but also great numbers of the poor, the lowly and the obscure. For all are equal at this Royal Board. Worthily receiving exalts and ennobles the humbly born and pricks the pride of those of high degree. The one becomes the host of a King, the other stands abashed at the condescension of God. Then what comparison is there between the most sumptuous banquet the wealth and taste and skill of man can spread and the wonderful perfections of the Eucharistic table? As for the splendor of the service, so to speak, it is God's anointed priest, arrayed in costly vestments, bearing the jeweled chalice and ciborium, and using the beautiful and striking ceremonial of the Mass, who ministers to us at this banquet.

Should you ask how palatable and nourishing is the Bread eaten at the King's table, it is enough to say that it "has in itself all sweetness" and is true soul-food, as it does for the soul what food does for the body; for it supports, builds up, refreshes and strengthens

the superior part of man; it restores the wasted tissues of the soul, frees it from feebleness and languor and gives it skill and energy and courage for praying, working and fighting.

If the soul is well all is well; for this is the deathless, priceless part of ourselves, and on its condition depends our true weal or woe both here and hereafter. But the soul cannot be kept in a healthy state unless it is regularly fed with nourishing food any more than the body can. Now, Holy Communion is the divinely prescribed diet of the soul, and Communion every day is none too often for those who wish to keep the soul in perfect health and vigor.

Then, why not, like Mephiboseth, dine daily with the King? If you say "I am not worthy," the answer is: "We go to Communion not because we are good, but because our Lord is; not because we deserve it, but because we need it." If it is the fear of falling into routine that keeps you from dining daily with the King, your objection is based upon the false principle "that Communion depends chiefly for its fruitfulness on the activity of the communicant, and activity is conceived under the form of actual and sensible devo-

tion." Listen to what Venerable de la Colombière, the priest whom Christ Himself chose as an apostle of reparation Communions, says on this subject:

"No lack of disposition can hinder the effects of the Sacrament except the presence of mortal sin. Since at each Communion we receive an increase of merit and habitual grace, it follows inevitably that one Communion disposes us to reap benefit from the next, and that consequently the more Communions we make, the better prepared we are to profit by those which are yet to follow."

Just apply the rules of common sense to this bugbear of "routine." If your son should say: "I shall take dinner hereafter only on Sunday, that I may eat with relish, and thus grow strong," what would you say to him? Or should your little daughter solemnly announce some day that she means to practise but once a month hereafter so as to become a great pianist, what a quantity of good advice she would at once receive! Or if a legal friend of yours remarked that by pleading but one case every year he hoped to become a skilful lawyer, how absurd his plan would seem!

But are you any more logical when you say:

"That I may receive Communion with more relish and profit, I will go but once a week, or every First Friday only, or merely at Easter"? No. Practice makes perfect, repetition brings skill. We do well, as a rule, what we do often.

Though Mephiboseth sat daily at the king's table, we nowhere read that by so doing he recovered the use of his feet. He probably remained a helpless cripple till he died. With us, however, it will be otherwise. For the wonderful food offered His guests by our royal Host restores and strengthens every faculty of the soul. If, hitherto. we have not been able to walk the road of God's commandments at all, daily Communion will give us the strength to do so. If we have been just limping painfully along, resting frequently and falling often, daily Communion will enable us to advance steadily and without stumbling, till we even gain the mountain heights of the Gospel counsels.

Then, at last, all who have come with faith and confidence to the altar-rail day after day as guests at Jesus' royal Banquet will become, like Mephiboseth, dwellers "in Jerusalem," the city of celestial peace, because, like him, they now "eat always of the King's Table."

"BEHOLD THY SON!"

THE QUEEN'S BANQUET

QUEEN ESTHER, we read in the Old Testament, once invited to a sumptuous banquet, which she had prepared, Assuerus, the King of Persia, and Aman, his prime minister. Her royal consort graciously consented to come to the dinner, and as for Aman, he was so flattered by the invitation that, calling together his friends, he announced to them, as a joyful climax to all the honors conferred on him by the royal bounty, that "Queen Esther hath invited no other to the banquet with the king but me, and with her I am also to dine to-morrow with the king."

Queen Esther had a deep purpose in giving this little party. For she hoped that the banquet would afford the king such pleasure that he would be willing to grant her a great favor she meant to ask of him in behalf of her people, the exiled Jews. Her plan succeeded. For Assuerus was so gratified by the entertainment the Queen provided that after dinner he said to her:

"What is thy petition, Esther, that it may be granted thee? And what wilt thou have

done? Although thou ask the half of my kingdom, thou shalt have it."

"If I have found favor in thy sight, O King," answered Esther, "and if it please thee, give me my life which I ask, and my people for which I request."

Her prayer was no sooner heard than granted, for she not only secured the revocation of a royal edict condemning to death on a certain day all the Jews in the Persian Empire, but she brought down upon the enemies of her race the very ruin they had plotted against Israel.

Now, Queen Esther effectually interceding with King Assuerus for her people is a manifest type of our Blessed Lady pleading with Almighty God for us sinners. The banquet, moreover, prepared by the beautiful Jewish wife of King Assuerus prefigures the bounteous table of the Holy Eucharist, which the Queen of Heaven may be said to have provided for her children.

For Mary seems almost as closely associated with the institution of the Blessed Sacrament as with the Incarnation. The Word made Flesh we owe largely to our Lady. Her holiness brought God down to this earth and Jesus was Mary's Christmas gift to the world.

But the Holy Eucharist is the Incarnation perpetuated. It is the Flesh our Saviour took from His Virgin Mother that He gives us in the Blessed Sacrament. Just as Our Lady, as Bossuet observes, was *"Jésus Christ commencé,"* "some beginning of Christ," she was also a beginning of the Eucharist. "The flesh of Jesus," observes St. Augustine in this connection, "is the flesh of Mary, and the Saviour gives us this flesh of Mary as the nourishment of our salvation." The same holy Doctor, contemplating the Infant Jesus at his Mother's breast, exclaims in a rapture of devotion: *"Lacta, O Virgo, panem nostrum!"* "Nourish, O Maiden, our Bread!" as if he would say: "By thus nursing your Divine Son, Mary, you are likewise feeding all the faithful whose nourishment He is one day to be. Let it, then, be your one care and solicitude, gentlest Mother, to watch over and protect our Eucharist."

So, in this sense, our Lady may be said to have given us the Blessed Sacrament. Francis Suarez, moreover, the great Jesuit theologian, does not fear to assert that the Holy Eucharist was instituted chiefly for Mary, because Jesus loved her best of all. Other grave theologians are of the opinion

that He had promised during the quiet years at Nazareth to make His Flesh the food of her and her children, and that her request for the miracle at Cana was but to remind Him of His promise. For the miracle of the marriage feast, according to the Fathers, is a type and figure of the Holy Eucharist, even more striking than Queen Esther's banquet.

Picture the scene of this second banquet. Many villagers of Cana have already gathered at the home of the bridegroom. That important person, gorgeously clad, has led his veiled bride into her new home, while ten wise virgins, their lamps well trimmed, sing songs of joy to the music of the flute. Within the house are arranged long tables decked with flowers and lights and laden with the richest viands the means of the groom's parents can provide. The seats of honor are taken by the newly wedded couple; Jesus we must look for in the lowest place, for He "began to do" before He taught. Beside Him sits His Mother, and not far off His six disciples.

As the night wears on, the supper-room resounds with gayety and laughter, which our Saviour's presence sanctifies and sanctions. Far from dampening in any way the harmless

merriment, He whose conversation knows no bitterness and His company no tediousness, increases by His singular charm of manner and His unaffected interest in others the enjoyment of His fellow-guests. But when the mirth of all is at its height the watchful Virgin observes the waiters first whispering together and then serving out the wine more sparingly. What she feared has happened—the wine is failing. Then this gracious Lady turns unasked to her all-powerful Son and, with a mother's confidence, says simply: "They have no wine."

There are but few of Mary's words recorded in the Scriptures. In all, we have but seven of her utterances quoted, and two of these precious sayings were first heard at the marriage-feast of Cana. Now, if the world makes much of even the most trifling observations of its great ones, what deep consideration should not the children of light give the words of God's own Mother!

"They have no wine." Mary's words are few, but they are full of power and meaning, for they are those of a mother pleading for her children. According to the Eucharistic interpretation of this text, it is as if our Lady asked: "Give them now, my beloved Son, that

wine of the Blessed Sacrament that You long ago promised me that You would one day leave us as the means of uniting in a mystic marriage the soul with her Creator. Make this Your first miracle."

Now, mark well our Lord's answer: "Lady, My hour is not yet come," or, by implication, "Mother, I remember My promise, but this is neither the time nor the place for Me to fulfil it. The world must first be prepared by My public ministry to receive the Holy Eucharist, which I will finally give you, Mother, at a far more solemn banquet than this. However, as a new pledge that I will then change wine into my Precious Blood, I will now make this water wine, because it is you who ask Me."

Well we know to what hour the Saviour was alluding; the hour of His First Mass, celebrated just after that solemn banquet He attended the night before He died. For, with Father Coleridge as a guide, we may picture the institution of the Blessed Sacrament as taking place, not at the table of the Last Supper, with only the Apostles present, as is commonly represented, but in another part of the Cenacle, to which the Eleven followed the Master on His saying "Arise, let us go hence!" Gathered there were the seventy-two disciples,

the holy women, and our Lady, waiting to assist at the wonderful Banquet foreshadowed by Esther's feast and Cana's wedding supper.

The mindful Mother has everything in readiness. Then her Divine Son, following a ritual not unlike that which St. Peter, who was present, afterwards gave the Roman Church, and which is essentially the same today, changes with His creative word bread and wine into His Sacred Body and Blood, while all adore. The Queen of the Apostles, in particular, kneels by, breathless with devotion, until Communion time comes, then, reverently drawing near the altar, with joy receives again from His own hand her Blessed Son. A Queen's Banquet, indeed!

Who can doubt that this Communion of Mary's was but the first of a long series, beginning on Easter morning and continuing daily without interruption till the time of her death? Until His Ascension, Jesus Himself surely communicated His Blessed Mother every morning, on His part rejoicing to give as nourishment to that stainless Maiden the sacred Flesh that she had given Him, and she on hers most eager to be thus nourished daily by Him whose babyhood it had been her daily privilege to nurse.

The time before Pentecost, too, was doubtless a novena of Communions for Mary and all who were persevering in prayer with her in the Cenacle, and after the coming of the Paraclete the long years she passed at Jerusalem and Ephesus in the Beloved Disciple's keeping were made supportable for the exile by daily Communion. Modern painters love to depict the scene. While envying angels look on, the Maiden-Mother kneels at the altar of a sunlit oratory to receive again from St. John's hand the God who first came to her the night of the Annunciation, years before, but who still comes daily, bringing from Heaven a message ever new. "Behold thy Son!" she seems to hear again, but now with joy.

Like her Divine Son, our Lady is a model for us in all things. What she did she would have her children do. Though she is eager for the salvation and the hallowing of all, she would have that brought about only in accordance with the laws established by her Son. "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye," she told the waiters at the marriage feast, and this she says to us likewise. Christ solemnly avers: "Amen, Amen, I say to you, except you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and

drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you," so His prescient Mother, as if to remind us from the very first that her Babe was meant to be our food, brought Him forth at Bethlehem, "the house of bread," and "laid Him," be it noted, "in a manger," a feeding-place.

Significant also is the fact that the Church has chosen the preface of Christmas as the one to be read or chanted on the solemnity of Corpus Christi and for all votive Masses of the Blessed Sacrament. "It is truly meet and just, right and available to salvation," the priest proclaims as a prelude to the rebirth of our Saviour, so soon to take place on the altar, "that we should always and in all places give thanks to Thee, O holy Lord, Father Almighty, eternal God; because by the Mystery of the Word made flesh, from Thy brightness a new light hath risen to shine on the eyes of our souls, so that, while we behold God visibly, we may be borne upward by Him to the love of things invisible." Does not this indicate that He who was "given unto us and born for us from a stainless Maiden," as the *"Pange Lingua"* sings, would have our Lady as closely identified with the mystery of the Holy Eucharist

as she is with that of the Nativity? Worthy of note, too, is the fact that "Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament," a title given to Mary by the Venerable Père Eymard, Pius X has twice sanctioned and enriched with indulgences.

Do not the Virgin Mother's images, too, in our churches commonly represent her ever holding out to us her Blessed Son, as if inviting all to receive Him often? Artists, however, are not always successful in making her appear really eager to give us her Lambkin, for her manner of offering Him is frequently so stiff and unnatural that she does not seem to be very desirous of having us take Him.

But in an ancient church at Avignon, in France, travelers tell us, an unknown sculptor has left a statue of our Lady and the Divine Child that admirably expresses in stone the mother's eagerness to place her Little One in the arms of every pilgrim coming to her shrine. Genius has given life to the cold marble. Mary, a girl of perhaps eighteen, shows in her face and in every line of her supple figure the vigor, the alertness, and the animation of youth. She has apparently heard the visitor walking up the aisle. She has lifted her head, thrown back her outer

robe, turned a little to the right, as though to intercept the stranger, and, leaning forward, while the Infant reclines in both her arms, extends her hands toward the altar-rail. In her face there is wistful confidence. Who can refuse her Child? Her lips would speak, did she not know that what she offers is far more eloquent than words. The Infant has turned slightly from His mother. His head is raised; the lips are parted in a smile, and the short, rounded arms and tiny hands are held out in mute appeal to be lifted from Mary's bosom. Beneath the statue is the door of the Tabernacle. Within waits our Lord in silence and with infinite patience. He who rules the minds of His creatures has inspired His servant, the devout sculptor, to place in marble above the Tabernacle this invitation to approach. To those who accept He gives Himself without reserve, by the hands of the priest, who takes Mary's place. Even Divine love could do no more.

So Mary may be said to be always urging the faithful to frequent Communion. When she appeared, for example, to Bernadette at Lourdes, did she say to that little maid: "Have my image set up in this grotto, and I will scatter my favors among all who come to do

me homage"? No. She ordered Bernadette to "go and tell the priests to build a church on this spot," because in every church there is a tabernacle, and in every tabernacle the Holy Eucharist, and where the Holy Eucharist is there are communicants, for she knows that the most effective way of applying the redemption to souls is by bringing them to Communion. Visitors at Lourdes to-day, on witnessing the magnificent processions of the Blessed Sacrament, the countless Masses said in the Basilica, and the crowds of communicants who throng to the altars, are sometimes at a loss as to whether Lourdes is a sanctuary of Mary or of her Divine Son. It is the shrine of both. For since that night the shepherds found Mary and her Child together the two can never be separated, and as in Bethlehem she held out her little Son to peasants and kings, so now at Lourdes she offers Him in the Holy Eucharist to both rich and poor, and makes the granting of her favors dependent on her clients' devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. Those, therefore, who profess to be lovers of our Lady should suspect the soundness of their devotion unless it leads them to please and imitate her by going to Communion often; and every day is none too

often. For nothing will tend to make us daily more like her Blessed Son than this practice, and Mary, far from being a jealous Mother, would have us resemble Him closely.

Then, too, our Queen, let it be observed in conclusion, invites to her banquet not one or two guests merely, and they of high rank, nor yet but once or twice only, as did Queen Esther in the case of Aman and Assuerus. But Mary urges all good Catholics, whether they be rich or poor, to enjoy nearly every day of their lives a Banquet which she has prepared on such a magnificent and sumptuous scale that the Persian splendor of Queen Esther's supper seems by comparison as mean and worthless as does whatever is human and transitory when weighed with the everlasting and divine. Besides, to deny and slight a queen's request, particularly such a peerless Queen as Mary, is ungracious and ill-bred.

The more numerous then are the worthy bidden guests that this greater and more gracious Esther sees at her Banquet, and the oftener they come the easier surely it will be for her to win for us from the Eternal King every heavenly grace and temporal benefit that we require. Daily, therefore, let us attend the Queen's Banquet.

"ARISE AND EAT"

JEZEBEL was seeking the life of Elias because he had put to shame and destroyed her priests of Baal. So the wicked queen solemnly swore to kill the prophet within a day, therefore "Elias was afraid," and to escape her vengeance fled far into the desert alone. At last, when he could go no further, the man of God, weary, hungry and disheartened, sat beneath the shade of a juniper tree and prayed for death, crying: "Lord, take away my soul; for I am no better than my fathers." It was wrong, however, of Elias to yield to despair. He should not have lost faith so easily in the Providence of God. Had not the prophet on another occasion been miraculously fed by ravens, supported on another by the unfailing oil and meal of the widow of Sarephta, and only recently had not his prayer brought down from Heaven first fire and then rain? With little hope of succor, nevertheless, he now seems to have gone to sleep in the juniper's shadow. Help was near, however; for soon there came an angel who touched him, saying: "Arise and eat." When Elias awoke he was astonished

to find at his head a hearth-cake and a vessel of water which God had sent him. Forthwith he ate and drank, then, being weary still, he fell asleep once more. But "the angel of the Lord," Holy Writ continues, "came again a second time, and touched him and said: 'Arise, eat, for thou hast yet a great way to go.'" So Elias "arose and ate and drank" and was so wonderfully fortified by the Heaven-sent nourishment that, fearing nothing, he "walked in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights unto the mount of God, Horeb," where the Lord of Hosts spoke to him words of counsel and comfort, when there came the "whistling of a gentle air."

The invigorating repast that the Angel of God brought to the persecuted prophet is a striking figure, as is plain, of the Holy Eucharist which God Himself gives faltering and frightened pilgrims for guidance and support on their long and perilous journey through life's desert to the celestial Horeb. In spite of the numberless marks of God's fatherly care that we have experienced when we are harassed, Elias-like, by the enemy of our souls, and beset with sin and temptation, we should perhaps be as ready as he to give up the struggle in despair, were

we not comforted and strengthened from time to time with that Bread from Heaven.

Partaking only once of the miraculous food, it should be observed, did not give the prophet all the courage and vigor he needed for continuing his journey to the mountain of God; the angel had to bid him eat again. This would seem to indicate that partaking of the Holy Eucharist only at wide intervals of time is not sufficient for supplying us with that strength needed to keep us advancing steadily and unswervingly toward our goal. No. We should refresh our souls often with this life-giving Sacrament, and every day is none too often. If Elias by eating twice in quick succession of a mere type of the Holy Eucharist was enabled to make a forty days' journey to Mount Horeb, with what giant strides will not those tread the path of holiness who receive in Communion every single day the wonderful Bread that was but feebly prefigured by the strengthening food of Elias?

By approaching the altar every morning we make Christ Himself our Guide, our Comforter, and our Protector during our pilgrimage toward the Delectable Mountain. He leads us by safe paths, defends us from

our foes, and, as of old on the road to Emmaus, He cheers and comforts His fellow-travellers with His sympathy and counsel; for all His ways are ways of pleasantness and all His paths are peace. But we on our part must of course accept the guidance, comfort and protection of our divine Companion, for "Woe to him that is alone, for when he falleth, he hath none to lift him up." The man whom thieves robbed on his way down to Jericho, was alone; the prodigal son came to misery because he was alone; the sheep that was lost strayed off alone. The daily communicant, however, far from being alone on his perilous journey to the mountain of God, has by his side Jesus Christ, his Elder Brother, strong to protect him and a defender to save. This thought should keep us from relaxing, through fear or discouragement, in our endeavor to gain the distant peaks of Horeb or of weakly permitting ourselves to be lured away from our path by the witchery of nonsense. For we have still a great way to go; we have as yet done but little for God; we have kept buried the talents He gave us to improve. Meanwhile time is fleeting and the night cometh.

"Let your loins be girt," was our Saviour's

exhortation to His disciples. In using this figure, the "Sower of chaste counsel" was alluding to the custom Orientals have, when traveling, of gathering up their flowing garments out of the dust or mire of the road. Their vesture is thus kept white and clean and their limbs are free for brisk walking. The stainless Son of Mary would also emphasize by the metaphor the necessity of perfect purity in those whose steps are bent toward Horeb; for uncleanness is doubtless the vice that has defiled the baptismal robe and entangled the wayward feet of most who fail to reach the Mount of God. Our eternal destiny may rest on the success with which even one such temptation is resisted. The Patriarch Joseph became the saviour of the chosen people because he prudently fled the occasion of this sin. Events were so shaped and fashioned by the hand of Heaven that, as a reward and result of his virtue, Joseph was raised to an office that enabled him to rescue from famine the sons of Jacob and give them a home in Egypt.

Consequences of as great moment to ourselves and others may follow our victories over temptations to uncleanness. "Let your loins," then, "be girt." Who pays greater

heed to this warning of Christ than the daily communicant? The Holy Eucharist is the sovereign remedy against all sins of impurity. That foul demon cannot abide in the heart that Jesus enters daily, for the Blessed Sacrament is the virginal Flesh of the Eternal Father's Only-begotten Son, who was born into this world of a Virgin Mother, whose altar is served by virgin priests, and who tends to make like Him those who receive Communion worthily and often. The Lamb of God loves to "feed among the lilies" and the wine of the Eucharist "burgeons forth virgins." Those, therefore, who go to the altar every day will easily keep pure and unstained the soul's garments, "the body of this death," and, free from entangling sins of uncleanness, will press on swiftly and steadily toward the Heavenly Mountain.

"What dost thou here, Elias?" asked Almighty God from the gentle breeze that the prophet had awaited on Mount Horeb. "With zeal have I been zealous for the Lord of hosts," answered Elias. This, too, the frequent communicant can say as he ascends every morning the hill of vision to converse with God. By receiving daily the glorified Body of Christ, he promotes most effectively

the sanctification of his own soul, the chief purpose our Divine Lord has in inviting him so often to the Holy Table. The frequent communicant shows a like zeal for the hallowing of others' souls. As a result of receiving daily, his prayers for the Church's needs will avail much with God, and his piety, by becoming winning and attractive, will extend the frontiers of Christ's Kingdom.

The daily communicant after receiving is lifted up, as it were, to a high mountain apart, above the world, and away from men, where he is transfigured in soul, as was Christ in body that morning on Mt. Thabor. The face of the soul shines as the sun, her garments, our good works, become as white as snow, and she herself from weak becomes strong; from foolish, wise; from cold, fervent; from selfish, generous and devoted.

The soul, moreover, by sharing daily in this strengthening food from Heaven acquires permanently qualities analogous to those the Body of our Lord possessed after His Resurrection. For He then shone with splendor, He could suffer no more, He could move instantaneously from place to place, He could pass through solid substances. In

a similar manner the soul of the daily communicant will be so full of inner sunshine that his face will be always cheerful and his ways cordial and winning. He will likewise be in a measure "impassible," for the "plain, heroic magnitude of mind," the practice of daily Communion produces, will make him bear serenely the thousand little crosses and annoyances that beset his path through life. *"Amara lento temperet risu"*—What is bitter he will season with a gentle smile. From daily Communion, too, comes a certain "agility" of soul that will enable him to place himself in sympathy with men of varied character or with the same person in his different moods, and by daily Communion likewise will be acquired that "subtility" of soul which is the secret of tact and *savoir faire* in social intercourse.

From the practice of frequent Communion we shall also learn to see as did the Apostles after the Transfiguration, "no one but only Jesus," for the eye of our intention will be so single that we shall discern in every detail of our lives nothing but His will, and in all our works we shall seek only to further His glory. "It is good for us to be here!" those may well exclaim who go even once to Com-

munion. What words, then, will express most fittingly the happiness enjoyed by him who receives every day he can?

After journeying, moreover, "in the strength of that food" for the forty days and forty nights of his mortal life, he will deserve, surely, on gaining at last the crests of God's everlasting hills, to hear said of him the words that were spoken of old above Mt. Thabor: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Does not St. John tell us that, "as many as received Him, He gave power to become the sons of God"? The children, then, most tenderly cherished by the Eternal Father will be those who "receive" his Blessed Son daily, who every morning "arise and eat" of strengthening Bread from the King's Table.

THE BREAD OF FAITH

EVIL days had fallen upon Israel. King Saul, by sacrilegiously exercising the priestly office, had forfeited God's protection, the Philistines had then invaded the country and reduced the chosen people to a state of helplessness by taking care that not a single smith should be left in all the land of Israel to make or sharpen the weapons of war. Consequently "when the day of battle was come, there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of the people that were with Saul and Jonathan."

In this crisis it is the faith of the king's valiant son that delivers Israel. Trusting to the Lord, with whom "it is easy to save either by the many or the few," Jonathan enters the Philistines' camp and slays a score of them. A wondrous earthquake increases the consternation of the enemy, but to complete their overthrow, when Saul bids the priest Achias "Bring out the ark of the Lord," such a frenzy of terror seizes the Philistines "that every man's sword is turned upon his neighbor," and great carnage follows.

Saul and his ten thousand now charge the

disordered ranks of the foe, and in his eagerness to drive the last invader from the land, the King of Israel calls down a rash curse on every "man that shall eat food till evening." A rash curse, indeed, for his troops would surely be better able to chase and slay the Philistines if they recruited their strength, as they hurried along, with whatever forage they could find.

Jonathan, however, unaware of his father's curse, was hastening tired and hungry through a forest, when he chanced to see a honeycomb in his path. Dipping his staff he picked up some honey and tasted it, when he experienced at once a wonderful increase in the keenness of his vision. Perhaps Jonathan's sharper eyes now detected skulking Philistines better than could his fasting followers; or perhaps the prince's swift arrows laid low so many of the retreating enemy that Israel was struck with amazement. Some exploit Jonathan certainly must have performed for which an exceptionally keen eye was needed, for we read that when his followers told Jonathan that by eating the honey he had fallen under the curse with which Saul had bound the people, the king's son, to justify himself, could appeal to those around him as

witnesses of his late achievements saying: "You have seen yourself that my eyes are enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey."

Surely it was the unwavering faith in God's protection shown by Jonathan in attacking almost single-handed the Philistine camp, that set in operation the series of wonders which ended in the deliverance of Israel from the yoke of the unbeliever. For God seemed to show his approval of that prince's courageous faith by causing a marvelous earthquake to alarm the enemy further; it was King Saul's faith, too, no doubt, that made the presence on the battle line of the Ark of the Covenant work such havoc among the Philistines; and finally, what was it but the wondrous honeycomb that made the trusting Jonathan's eye so keen and his aim so true, that the invader was all but driven from the land?

By Saul's victory, however, the war with the Philistines was not ended. It dragged on with varying fortunes for many years. Indeed, it has never wholly ceased, but may be said to be raging fiercely still, between all valiant Catholics, the "true Israelites" of our day, on the one hand, and on the other, the unnumbered Philistines who swell the

ranks of modern unbelief; so that now, to be victorious, the Church requires not merely one, but many a Jonathan of fearless faith to drive the enemy from his position, to note with a keen glance the slightest hostile movement, and with unerring arrows to put him to headlong flight.

"But Jonathans are few nowadays," it will be remarked, "and such intrepid faith as his seems to be growing rarer every year." To all of us, however, faith like Jonathan's was given at Baptism, to strengthen and beautify the soul. If our spiritual growth has not kept pace with our mental and physical development, it must be because we have not been nourishing, training and protecting this gift of faith, as carefully as we have guarded and improved our endowments of body and of mind.

Yet the souls of Catholics have seldom been in greater need than now of a robust and militant faith. For we are men of our times and cannot avoid breathing the air that surrounds us, however tainted, however foul it may be. And that the atmosphere in which the souls of many to-day must live is lamentably vitiated and impure no thoughtful student of the times can deny. Negation and

doubt were never more the fashion. A large number of those with whom we are cast in social or commercial relations frankly acknowledge that they have long ago abandoned all belief in Revelation; the multitude is dazzled by the material triumphs of the age, and is being led astray by false teaching; and almost every paper or periodical one reads, proclaims, either covertly or openly, that it is consummate folly to live the life of faith, since there is no higher life than that of the senses, and no brighter world than this we see.

The effect on the soul's life and health of this poisoned atmosphere would not be disastrous, if the soul were well fortified against it. The prevalent weakness of faith in our day, as Pope Pius X clearly pointed out, is caused not by the progress of so-called science but by a deplorable ignorance, on the part of many Catholics, of their holy religion. They are dismayed by the blasphemies of the wicked, they listen with respect to the Church's enemies, they disloyally criticize their Mother's appearance or question her assertions, because they do not realize the strength of her position, and the beauty of her teachings. From this ignorance there follows in too many cases a practical inability

to appreciate the nobility of a Christian life, and the prime importance of keeping united with Christ by means of sanctifying grace.

Yet mere study of our religion is not enough to safeguard our faith. When a dogmatic truth is proposed to the intellect the will must be strong enough to accept it and, if need be, to reduce it, in the details of life, to practice. For, as every confessor of experience knows, it is sin that generally leads to unbelief. The faith received in Baptism is seldom taken away save from those who by evil living have deserved to lose it. "When a man ceases to believe, it is because he has yielded to some consideration of pride or sensuality." Men reject the Creed, because the Decalogue is entrenched behind it, just as they would refuse to admit that every triangle is equal to two right angles, if that mathematical truth involved any moral obligations.

Where now shall we best find the means of fortifying our souls against the infected air it often has to breathe nowadays? How can we bring ourselves effectively to such a keen appreciation of the beauty and power of our holy religion, that we shall never feel we know and love it sufficiently well? What, finally, will give us that vigor of soul that

will make us valiant in the defense of our faith and zealous in forcing its beauty to shine out from our lives?

The words of Jonathan seem to suggest the best means. "My eyes are enlightened," he says, "because I tasted a little of this honey." For the honey, of which Jonathan long ago tasted but a little, is the type of that "Bread from Heaven having in itself all sweetness," which the Church in Holy Communion now offers in limitless abundance to her warring children, that they, by often partaking of it, may experience such a marvelous increase of keenness in their faith, which is the eye of the soul, that like the son of Saul they may discover every lurking foe and put to flight, with a well-aimed arrow, the last Philistine. For faith to be kept in good condition requires, like all living organisms, nourishment and exercise. Now what will feed and train faith better than going to Communion? The Holy Eucharist, moreover, which is called even at the most solemn moment of the Mass the "mystery of faith," makes greater demands, perhaps, than any other Sacrament on the faith of believers. All that our senses perceive in the Sacred Host is directly opposed to what faith teaches. When we

receive, we see bread, we touch bread, we taste bread, but through the sense of hearing by which comes faith we correct the testimony of the other senses and believe, on the authority of God's unerring Church, that concealed beneath the white veils of the species lies our Blessed Lord Himself, human and divine:

"Faith for all defects supplying
Where the feeble senses fail."

The dogma of the Real Presence is one our Blessed Lord taught His Apostles: "The Bread which I will give you," He promised, "is My Flesh for the life of the world." "How can this Man give us His Flesh to eat?" asked the unbelieving Jews. "Amen, amen, I say unto you," persisted Christ with a solemn oath, "except you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you." "For My Flesh is meat indeed; and My Blood is drink indeed." Three times He repeats His assertion. These reiterations of the same statement are most remarkable; for it was our Lord's way when misunderstood to correct His hearers. He set right Nicodemus, for instance, as to the meaning of being "born again." Sometimes, however, it is the

inspired Evangelist who explains Christ's metaphors: "He spoke of the temple of His body," says St. John.

But it was likewise our Saviour's custom when His plain assertions were perversely misconstrued or denied to repeat them in even more forcible language. When the Jews, for example, objected: "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" "Jesus said to them: 'Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham was made, I am!" On hearing outlined in the synagogue of Capharnaum the dogma of the Real Presence, many of His disciples said: "This saying is hard and who can hear it?" and "went back, and walked no more with Him." But offering no new explanation of His words, Jesus calmly lets the unbelievers go. Then turning to the Twelve with the earnest query: "Will you also go away?" He receives from St. Peter, in the name of us all, a confession of faith in the mystery of the Holy Eucharist: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have known that Thou art Christ the Son of God." "If one who was merely 'man,'" St. Peter would imply, "had said that he would give us his

flesh to eat, we too should find the saying 'hard,' and would not believe it. But Thou who makest the promise we know to be God Omnipotent; so faith is easy."

Being likewise the God of infinite truth, Jesus kept His promise. A year afterwards the night before He died, He gave us the living Bread of His Sacred Body as the food of our souls. Further prepared for the acceptance of the mystery by witnessing stupendous miracles like the raising of Lazarus, the walking on the sea, the changing of water into wine, and the multiplication on two occasions of loaves and fishes, the Apostles on the first Holy Thursday gave the full assent of their faith to the dogma of the Real Presence.

Here is the Evangelists' account of the institution of the Holy Eucharist: "Jesus took bread, and blessed and broke, and gave to His disciples, and said: 'Take ye, and eat; this is My Body.' And taking the chalice He gave thanks; and gave to them saying: 'Drink ye all of this. For this is My Blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins.' 'Do this for a commemoration of Me.'"

"WILL YOU ALSO GO AWAY?"

Thus did our Divine Saviour leave to His Church the Holy Eucharist, both a sacrament and a sacrifice, thus did He institute the sacred priesthood, thus did He establish here a new form of His personal presence which would be the light, the comfort and the strength of millions of His children till the end of time.

We should remember, moreover, that as often as we receive Holy Communion we make public profession of our belief in a dogma which Catholicism from the very beginning of her history has tenaciously held. The testimony of the catacombs, of the earliest Fathers, of the primitive liturgies, leaves no doubt as to the faith of antiquity in the Real Presence, a faith which came to the Infant Church through Christ's Apostles. To this sublime dogma the greatest intellects and noblest characters the world has seen have given their unqualified assent. Like the four and twenty ancients in the Apocalypse, they cast the golden crowns of their reason before the throne of the Sacred Host, in intellectual submission to a mystery that far transcends the grasp of their minds. Among them are profound doctors like St. Augustine, St. Chrysostom, St. Bernard and

St. Anselm; subtle theologians like St. Thomas Aquinas and Father Francis Suarez; such majestic Popes as Leo the Great, Innocent III and Pius V; powerful princes like Charlemagne, Alfred the Great and St. Louis; such men of genius as Dante, Calderon, Michael Angelo and Da Vinci; Catholic champions like Sobieski and Don John of Austria; such modern minds as O'Connell, Newman, Windthorst and Pasteur.

Professing with enthusiasm the same belief is that vast and shining army of martyrs, confessors and virgins, the choice and master spirits of their age, who bore heroic testimony in life and in death to the truth of the Real Presence. Add to their number the throngs of bishops, priests, monks and nuns, friars, clerics regular and sisters, the salt of the earth and the light of the world, who found in the Holy Eucharist the food of zeal and prayer and sacrifice.

Add to these the uncounted millions of the Church's loyal children who down the centuries from Calvary until this very hour have drawn support and consolation for their souls from faith in the Blessed Sacrament. Then with all this noble company and in union with the Universal Church let us

protest as we kneel each morning for Communion: "Christ Jesus, Son of the Living God, I firmly believe that Thou art here really and truly present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. If herein I be in error, it is by Thyself, O Lord, I am deceived."

Those whom it will cost some sacrifices thus to manifest frequently at the altar-rail their faith in our Divine Lord, should remember for their comfort that St. Peter was declared blessed for confessing only once Christ's Divinity, veiled but imperfectly as it was by the sacred Flesh of the Eternal Word. How much greater will be the praises they shall one day hear from the lips of God who by coming often to Holy Communion publicly profess their belief, not only in the divine, but also in the human nature of our Lord, though both are deeply hidden beneath the accidents of bread?

The very intimacy with His Divine Majesty that we enjoy in Communion increases our faith. It grows by what it feeds on. We know from the Gospels what delight it gave our Lord to see any manifestation of strong faith in Him, as, for instance, when he praised the pious Centurion's faith, and how eager he was to grant to all who asked it, an increase of

that same faith. Will not those then who receive Him at Communion with all the fervor they can, soon perceive in themselves such a quickening of the life and vigor of their faith, that not only will their acceptance of all the teachings of Holy Church be ready and easy, but there will be awakened in them that delicate "Catholic sense" and a generous enthusiasm for all that the Church fosters, favors or approves? Without question; for the Holy Eucharist is at once both the torch and the touchstone of faith.

The faith that is fed at the Communion rail is sure to show by blossoming into deeds, how thoroughly alive it is. By receiving Christ into our hearts we appropriate the strength and working power of God Himself. He has promised that those who believe in Him shall do the works that He does and even greater works; so we can expect that the practical fruits of our Communions will be proportioned to the strength of the faith that is in our hearts when we receive.

Receiving often, moreover, this food of faith, is the best of aids for holy living, since "the prime effect of frequent Communion," as Cardinal Mercier excellently puts it, "is to do away with interested motives for unbelief."

As all who are in a state of grace are worthy to receive every day, keeping free from grave sin is the essential preparation for daily Communion, and if mortal sin is avoided, faith is generally secure. A well known critic lays it down in one of his essays that "the perfection of human nature is sweetness and light." If this be true, may we not, by using these words in a sense far higher than did their author, discern in Holy Communion of which Jonathan's luminous honey was the type, the richest source to-day of the light and sweetness that our nature needs to perfect it? If by going to Communion we can drive from our hearts all doubt and bitterness, and flood them with the light of peace and faith we shall ever be drawing nearer to the highest perfection of which our nature is capable.

Yet these results will not be attained by tasting only at wide intervals of time "a little of this honey"; our soul's blindness is so dense and its bitterness so deep, that we must eat often of this Bread from Heaven if we would progress steadily toward perfection. The honey of which the son of Saul tasted but once was only a weak figure of the Holy Eucharist, yet his eyes were so enlightened and his body so strengthened by what he ate,

that he soon won an easy victory over the Philistines. What success then in overcoming the difficulties of faith and in vanquishing its enemies, shall not they have who receive the Holy Eucharist, that wondrous fulfilment of the type, not only now and then, but every day?

"THE FRUIT OF THE VINE"

"I AM the Vine," said our Blessed Lord in the beginning of His Post-Communion discourse to the Apostles, "you are the branches." The figure was appropriate and striking; for Christ had just pronounced the words of consecration over "the fruit of the vine" and passed the life-giving Cup to His disciples. The metaphor, moreover, would appeal forcibly to His hearers, for the grape's characteristics were familiar to the men of vine-clad Syria. Considering its size the grape is the most productive of trees. Its slender stem bears branches that abound with rich clusters, yet no branch, however close it may be to the stem, will thrive and bear unless there flows into it constantly an unimpeded stream of sap. Otherwise the branch grows barren, withers and dies, and a dead grapevine is so utterly worthless that it does not even make good fuel.

What Jesus said to the Apostles the night of the Last Supper, He to-day repeats to us. The unchanging Son of God is still the Vine and Christian souls are the branches. Into them He is ever pouring, like sap, His vivify-

ing grace, without which we are powerless to do the least good work that merits Heaven. By this wondrous grace, however, we "abide in" Him, and are enabled, according to His promise, to keep faithfully the Commandments and the counsels, to have our prayers all answered, and to give His Father glory by bringing forth abundant fruits of holiness. This flow of grace began when we were engrafted in the True Vine at Baptism, the Sacrament of Penance was the pruning knife that removed again and again whatever threatened the life and health of the branch, and God's word, whether read from holy books, heard from the altar, or felt in the heart, is to the soul what air and sunshine are to the vine.

The circumstances under which the parable was spoken would indicate, however, that our Lord meant Holy Communion to be the main channel for conveying to the souls of believers sanctifying grace, and from the nature and purpose of sap, the vine's life-blood, we may infer that He wished us to receive Communion often. In the grape's producing season, as long as the sap is flowing from the stem into the branches, they will continue to be like the vine from which they receive their

life, and will yield a good harvest. But let the flow be lessened, interrupted or retarded, and the clusters, small, few and bitter at first, will at last disappear altogether.

To avoid the remotest danger of such a calamity, if we are wise we shall keep up constantly an abundant flow of grace into our hearts by going to Communion every morning. Daily Communion, to be sure, is not the only means of maintaining in the soul an uninterrupted stream of this life-giving grace; but it is without question the richest and readiest source of spiritual strength at the disposal of Catholics to-day, and it would seem, indeed, since the Holy Father's famous Decree on the subject appeared, that God desires to give all who can take up the practice those graces He has hitherto sent through other channels. Combined with daily Communion all other works of piety increase wonderfully their effectiveness; but what other devotions can equal, either for propitiating Heaven or for hallowing the soul, the use of daily Communion?

This metaphor of the vine that our Saviour used on giving us the Holy Eucharist clearly implies the closest of unions. "Abide in Me, the true Vine," He would seem to say, "by

going often to the altar, for He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood abideth in Me and I in him. As I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me." The vital and organic relation that exists between the vine and its branches is weak and imperfect, however, compared with the mystical union of Christ with the soul of the worthy receiver. Communion makes us participants of the divine Nature itself. "The participating of the Body and Blood of Christ," says St. Leo, "has this as its chief work, to change us into Him." "And in such wise," continues St. Augustine, "that being made His Body and having become His members, we may *be* what we *receive*." Indeed, the economy of the Incarnation, according to the Fathers, is not quite completed until by the Holy Eucharist the Head joins to Himself the members and is united to the body which He is to animate and govern, while some theologians maintain that the chief effect of Communion "is the union of the very soul of Jesus with ours, not in figure, but in reality."

The sap is the life of the vine. The sap carries from the stem to the branches the nourishment they receive, bringing them

health, vitality and fruitfulness. For each kind of life in this world it is clear a special food is needed. Vegetable life, like the vine's, is sustained chiefly by chemicals drawn from the ground; animal life is supported by taking from the earth, the air or the water whatever is required; intellectual life thrives on study and investigation; the affections are kept alive by the offices of love and friendship, and for the sustenance of the soul's life, as is natural, a special food is also needed.

So our divine Redeemer, we may fancy, well considered what kind of food would nourish best the soul He had created, and deciding that, as man has by grace actually become a sharer of the divine life, nothing would do as a source of health and strength for his soul but a divine food. So God must make Himself the soul's nourishment. But how should this be done? Love found a way. Jesus simply took the form of bread and wine, that by entering like ordinary food the body of man, He might reach the soul and impart to it that divine life He died that we might live. "Thou knowest, O my God, who madest us," exclaims Cardinal Newman, "that nothing can satisfy us but Thyself, and therefore Thou hast caused Thy own

self to be meat and drink to us. O most adorable mystery! O most stupendous of mercies! Thou, most Glorious and Beautiful and Strong and Sweet, Thou didst know well that nothing else would support our immortal natures, our frail hearts, but Thyself; and so Thou didst take a human flesh and blood, that they as being the Flesh and Blood of God, might be our life." It is life, indeed, in its fulness that the Eucharist gives us. The daily communicant lives, not a divided life, but a life in union with Christ's and with that of all the souls whom He nourishes with the wine of His Precious Blood. We have here in this world only a life in outline, but daily Communion will bring those who practise it into the finished, perpetual, eternal life. "He that eateth this Bread shall live forever."

A ceaseless flow of good sap, as has been shown, gives vitality and vigor to the vine. For the body's well-being, in like manner a rich and abundant supply of blood is needed. What blood is to the physical man, or sap to the vine, frequent Communion is to the soul. In our veins and arteries, as we know, circulates a fluid that carries nutriment to the body's cells, removes from them all waste

products and brings from one part of the body to another whatever chemical substances are there needed. Living organisms, too, that find their way into cells the blood fights off or utterly destroys by producing what will neutralize or kill the dangerous foes. When the blood is in fine condition and in perfect circulation it easily discharges all these offices. Let it once be diseased itself, however, or course sluggishly or interruptedly through the body, and we know but too well what happens.

The grace that flows from the Holy Eucharist may be said to pervade in a similar way the soul of the daily communicant, bringing health and strength to its diseased or weakened faculties, removing all worn-out, useless tissues, repelling the attacks of its enemies, and fortifying it, now here, now there, against the assaults of Satan. But to keep the soul in perfect condition the circulation of its life-blood must not be interrupted. We should go to Communion every day. Otherwise the flow many become so thin or stagnant that we shall not be able to throw off as promptly and effectively as we otherwise would some contagion that menaces the health of the soul, or to repel with vigor

and courage some sudden onslaught from the foes of our salvation.

The manner that a living thing like the vine grows and thrives is instructive. The higher type of life, according to nature's laws, assimilates the lower. Plants absorb inorganic substances, and many animals feed on vegetation, changing it into flesh. A substance, moreover, must be dead before a living body can assimilate it. When there is question, however, of the Holy Eucharist this law does not hold. Our soul, indeed, when we receive, is fed with God, but Christ cannot change the substance of our soul into His. He weakens, however, our evil tendencies, purifies our hearts, puts new strength into our wills, and makes us with each successive Communion more and more like Himself. "He brings with Him all His own feelings and inclinations, particularly those He has most at heart; He desires to imprint them on our souls, giving Himself to us under the form of food, that as food communicates to the body its own qualities, so also He may inspire the soul with His own dispositions."

That He may readily effect these results, however, He must find the soul dead to sin, and to all affection for sin. Those, there-

fore, who receive Communion worthily must be in a state of grace and should have a desire to lead a better life, or to be more like our Blessed Lord. This wish they will manifest most sincerely by going to the altar every day, in order that the bond between Vine and branches may never be broken, but that the divine vitality of Christ may always be flowing into every limb. Then will the Heavenly Father, the Master of the Vineyard, rejoice to see the branches, as a result of their close and constant union with the Vine, producing abundant, rich and permanent fruit, fruit that will "remain" with them to glorify God eternally; for no one, surely, who practises daily Communion perseveringly and worthily need have any fear of being cut off from the Vine, cast forth, and burned.

Daily communicants, indeed, may themselves be considered "the fruit of the Vine," the choicest fruit, the fruit of which the Master of the vineyard is proudest. Just as the juice of the grape refreshes and cheers the heart of man, those who partake every morning at the altar of the "wine" that Christ has "mingled" for them, should be springs of joy and sunshine the whole day

after. "For in true joyfulness many graces are included; joyful people are loving; joyful people are forgiving; joyful people are munificent. Joy, if it be a Christian joy . . . makes men peaceful, serene, thankful, gentle, affectionate, sweet-tempered, pleasant, hopeful; it is graceful, tender, touching, winning."

The daily communicant who makes such joyfulness as this conspicuous in his life will doubtless lead many observant relatives, friends and associates to frequent, like him, the King's Table; for nothing would better promote or more widely recommend the practice than the conviction that this attractive cheerfulness is the fruit of daily Communion.

"LORD, GIVE US ALWAYS THIS BREAD."

THE BREAKFAST OF THE SOUL

"COME and dine," said the risen Saviour to His tired disciples, as He stood among them on the shore of the Galilean lake, early that bright spring morning long ago.

"And Jesus cometh and taketh bread and giveth them," first to impetuous Peter, the water still dripping from the fisherman's coat that disciple had cast about himself as he plunged into the sea to reach our Lord first; then to John, whose sharp eyes could see the Master even in the dark; then to eager-hearted James; then to Thomas, no longer a doubter; and so to the rest, moving slowly through the group of hungry fishermen, handing them their breakfast Himself, "comforting His own," and making them forget in the happiness of the moment their long night of fruitless labor.

Now the "Come and *dine*" of our English version may be also rendered, according to the Greek of St. John's Gospel, "come and *breakfast*"; as if the Master who understands the slightest needs of His disciples and sees everything that happens to them, would say: "Last night's work was hard and discouraging and you have not had a morsel to eat. You must

be very hungry. But I have been getting something ready for you here. Come and take breakfast with Me." So all joyfully partake of the simple fare the Saviour offers them, "knowing that it is the Lord."

"Come and breakfast."

As our Divine Redeemer spoke in days of old to His disciples He seems to speak again to-day to all His followers. For what is the remarkable decree the Holy Father issued some years ago on Daily Communion but a gracious renewal of that invitation of our Saviour?

"Come and breakfast." But dining and breakfasting are daily acts. Most men breakfast every day. They must, to keep their bodies well and strong. Few Americans certainly would care to face a morning's work without first taking a substantial breakfast.

"Come and breakfast," the "Great White Shepherd" urges all His flock. Good food, and good food every day, is as necessary for the soul as for the body, and the Blessed Sacrament is the most nutritious soul-food there is. It possesses all the qualities of perfect food, for as all natural food that is food indeed, takes away hunger, renews the worn-out tissues of the body, and promotes

its health and growth, so the Holy Eucharist, our "supersubstantial bread," satisfies the hungry soul, repairs the losses that it daily suffers and renders it robust and strong.

"Come and breakfast." Those who breakfast each day on this living food of God, find that, unlike ordinary food, it converts into itself him who worthily receives it, that it is an energizing food, adapting itself wonderfully to the present needs of the soul, and has besides a strange prospective value; it gives the grace to master unforeseen temptations and to bear up under unexpected trials.

"Come and breakfast." The primitive Christians accepted this invitation every day. The Acts relate how they "continued daily . . . breaking bread from house to house"; how they persevered "in the communication of the breaking of bread." This practice goes far to explain the singular zeal and fervor that the infant Church displayed, how "the multitude of believers," for example, "had but one heart and one soul," how they "persevered in the doctrine of the Apostles and in prayer," how "their possessions and goods they sold, according as each one had need," and how "great grace was in them all." Should not the same food produce the same results to-day?

"Come and breakfast." The crying need of the Church to-day, we hear it said, is saints. What better way is there of meeting this great need than that which the Holy Father has adopted, than that of urging the faithful to come every day to the very source and fount of holiness? Frequent Communion made the saints of the past: it will form saints to-day. The large majority of the confessors in the Roman Martyrology is made up of priests and bishops, men who received Communion every time they offered Mass.

Then why not come to breakfast every day?

Do not urge "lack of time" as your excuse for neglecting so great a privilege. Do not let your absorption in business keep you away. You are never too occupied to refresh your body with its morning repast. Let the soul have her food too. Communion was not meant for the leisured classes only. Make a cheerful sacrifice of the little time or trouble it costs you to hear Mass fasting every day, and rest assured that if you show this confidence in our Lord's help, all your undertakings will succeed; for by going every morning to the altar, you show that you are seeking first of all God's kingdom, and He will see that you do not lose that

portion of the kingdom of this world it will help you to have. "They that seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good." Daily Communion, remember, does not create new duties, but aids you to fulfil properly those you already have by giving you clearer light, warmer enthusiasm, and greater strength.

Then why not come to breakfast every day? "But I fear routine." There are two kinds of routine: an unavoidable one which arises from the weakness of our nature and in the course of time makes even the most sacred things familiar, and another which is caused by our own carelessness. The first we cannot help. Moreover, our Divine Saviour took few measures to protect Himself from its consequences. For in the Holy Eucharist He veils His majesty, and, girded with the accidents of bread, ministers to us. Did He permit but one ray of His glory to shine out from the Tabernacle, who would dare receive Him? If men realized thoroughly what Communion means, no one would go. As for the sense of routine for which we are to blame, daily Communion is itself the remedy for that. One of the effects of the Blessed Sacrament, according to the Council of Trent, is to "deliver us from our daily

faults." So by to-day's Communion we shall secure the grace, if we ask for it with fervor, to receive to-morrow more worthily.

Then why not come to breakfast every day? "Daily Communion for me! What would people say?" But you would not discontinue your morning meal just because some neighbors commented upon your habit of taking it daily, nor would the fear of gossip keep you from using the medicine a skilful doctor had prescribed for you. If out of regard for others' opinions you do not neglect your body's health, why neglect your soul's? Daily Communion, moreover, is now meant to be the normal practice of Catholics and should seem nothing extraordinary. "To receive Communion is to assimilate the maximum of energy with the highest intensity of light." What folly, then, not to use each morning so effective a means of sanctification!

Then why not come to breakfast every day? "I make better Communions when I receive more rarely." That is, you experience more sensible devotion. Let the fact be granted. But "first bread and then honey." The chief purpose our Lord has in visiting our souls at Holy Communion is not to converse with us,

but to nourish us. Those who receive, even without perceptible sweetness, every day, are surely in a better spiritual condition, as a rule, than the man who approaches the Holy Table, though with great fervor, but once a month. Just as one "coming into the house from an icy temperature," is Father Cros' comparison, "and entering the apartment where you have been warming yourself for some time, will suddenly experience a sensation of warmth and general comfort which you yourself do not. Similarly a man, after passing two or three days without tasting food, devours with relish the coarse bread which would disgust you. All the same, these sharp transitions from one state to its opposite, though more exciting, are not as valuable as the peace and insensible well-being produced by an equable régime."

Then why not come to breakfast every day? "But I am not worthy of receiving so often." Are you worthy at Easter? If you are not worthy to go each day, neither are you worthy to go once a year. "Fitness for Communion," a great Doctor has said, "should not be measured by time merely, but by purity of soul." The truly humble man knows his misery so well that he trust-

fully comes for relief as often as he can to the only One who can give it. Receive this Sacred Food with all reverence; yes, but the reverence that would keep you from coming often is false and Jansenistic. The greatest saints said truly: *Non sum dignus,*—"I am not worthy," yet they did not fail to receive Communion frequently. Objections to frequent Communion that are based on our unworthiness are by no means new. They are at least as old as the fifth century. For Cassian, who then ruled the monastery of St. Victor at Marseilles, answers them as follows: "If we acknowledge that we are sinners, we should not on this account abstain from Communion, but on the contrary find in the consideration of our condition an additional reason for approaching the Holy Table in order to find a remedy for the ills of our soul, provided, always, that, filled with humility and lively faith, we consider ourselves unworthy to receive so great a grace, like the sick, who beg of the Divine Healer their cure. Otherwise we could not deem it possible to communicate worthily once a year, even at Easter, as do certain religious who conceive such an idea of the dignity of this divine Sacrament and of the sanctity that

should be theirs in order to receive it, that they consider it indispensable to have perfect holiness and spotless purity, whilst on the contrary, it is this Sacrament itself which renders us holy and pure. From their point of view, these men commit the very sin of presumption that they pretend to avoid, since if they communicate once a year, they must consider themselves worthy of it then. It would be far better to receive Holy Communion every Sunday, in order to obtain a remedy for our spiritual ills, believing and confessing with sincere humility that we can never be worthy of it, rather than to persuade ourselves through secret pride that we are worthy to partake of it after a year's preparation." Does not this passage read as if written but yesterday? There is no escape from the abbot's dilemma.

Then why not come to breakfast every day? "What, every day? I? No, indeed! Daily Communion is for saints!" And for those too who are not saints, that they may become such. Communion is not a reward for being good, one cannot repeat too often, but a means for keeping good. After all, according to the Holy Father's letter, the only dispositions for receiving with profit are freedom from grave

sin and from unworthy motives. No one can commit mortal sin, remember, without knowing it; for three elements, serious matter, full knowledge and deliberate consent, must combine to make a grave sin. And as for the fear of receiving out of unworthy motives, remember that you receive worthily provided you go to the altar out of a desire of being better or of growing more like our Lord and not merely from vanity or ostentation.

Then why not come to breakfast every day? "But I keep committing numberless venial sins, and I can't be always going to Confession." That is true. Nor can the priest be always hearing you. For if daily Communion is to become at all common, the faithful must learn to go to receive this Sacrament without previous Confession. Generally speaking, weekly shrift is quite sufficient. But even this is not required, for by a special decree of the Holy Father's, daily communicants can now gain all current plenary indulgences without confessing weekly, which seems to indicate the Church's mind in the matter. After all, even to receive the Holy Eucharist in a state of venial sin is not another venial sin, or a "half sacrilege." But well instructed communicants need never

receive in venial sin. For during Mass just lift your eyes to the Crucifix, reflect that our Divine Lord died on the Cross for you, that He has given you every blessing you have received and is, besides, infinitely good in Himself. Then forget Heaven and hell in the thought of your sins, but repent of them because they have been the cause of such sufferings to your greatest Benefactor. If you now repeat slowly and sincerely your act of contrition it will become a perfect one, washing away from your heart all venial sin. Then the general absolution of the priest will make your soul still whiter, while your fervent Communion itself will so completely purge away all impurities that on retiring to your place that beautiful prayer before a Crucifix, which begins "Look down upon me, good and gentle Jesus," with its five accompanying Paters, Aves and Glorias for the Holy Father's intentions, may be repeated with a good likelihood of your securing a plenary indulgence.

Then why not come to breakfast every day? Just consider the great advantages of daily Communion. "The Body of Christ," says St. Bernard, "is the remedy for sick souls, the way of pilgrims, the strength of the weak, the joy of the strong. It cures all diseases,

it preserves health. By it man becomes meeker and more humble under correction, more patient, more persevering in work, more ardent in love, more prudent in danger, more prompt in obedience, more fervent and more pious in thanksgiving."

With each Communion there is a vast increase of sanctifying grace in the soul of worthy receivers, and the richer in grace they are the closer grows their likeness to the Son of God, and the more nearly they resemble Him, the dearer they become to the Eternal Father, the more meritorious are their works, the more powerful their prayers, the easier the practice of virtue, and the higher their place in Heaven. So come to breakfast every day.

THE BREAD OF THANKFULNESS

THE Wonder-worker was passing through the city of Jericho. Its priests and merchants, soldiers and tax-gatherers, were all pushing and jostling one another as they crowded toward the gate of the town in their eagerness to catch at least a glimpse of Jesus of Nazareth as He departed, surrounded as usual, by a band of enthusiastic disciples. There was one in that surging throng more eager than the rest to see this Friend of publicans and sinners. It was little Zachaeus, the opulent chief of all the revenue collectors in Jericho. But so bitterly hated was he by his countrymen for acting as the willing agent of Roman fraud and extortion that, push or plead as he would, not one of those who lined in crowds the city's main thoroughfare was ready to yield an inch of ground to Zachaeus.

"Go back to your toll-booth," they would scornfully cry, "and reckon up your morning's robberies."

Far too short of stature to see over the heads of the multitude, and repulsed at every point, Zachaeus soon realized that unless he

at once found a way to command a view of the street he would miss altogether the coveted sight of the Messias; for a stir and a murmur of expectation in the throng indicated that the stranger was drawing near. Then Zachaeus in his quandary suddenly bethought him of a tall sycamore tree that stood by the road leading out of the town. He would run ahead of the multitude, climb that tree, and thus enjoy an unobstructed view of the Wonder-worker as He came out of the city gate. With Zachaeus to think was to act; so he hurried to the sycamore, pulled himself up into its branches, and wholly deaf to the insults, jeers and laughter of the approaching throng, earnestly scanned from his coign of vantage this "Friend of sinners," who had even chosen a tax-gatherer named Levi, it was reported, one of His Apostles.

It was not curiosity alone, however, that made Zachaeus so desirous of seeing the distinguished Stranger, it was a vague longing, that he would have found hard to express in words, for something higher and nobler than the sordid cares that had hitherto engrossed his life and energies. This mysterious soul-hunger of the despised publican

was soon to be fully sated. For just as our Saviour is passing beneath the sycamore He suddenly looks up, sees Zachaeus in his eyrie of green leaves, calls him by name, and, with a winning smile, says:

"Zachaeus, hasten to descend."

The tax-gatherer, with joyful alacrity, begins to obey, and as he climbs down he hears the great Rabbi, who had not tarried even for a moment with the rich merchants or proud Pharisees of Jericho, now saying to a social outcast:

"For this day I must abide in thy house."

The home of Zachaeus is near at hand; so thither he joyfully ushers his distinguished Visitor, leads Him to a seat of honor and orders the best in the house to be set forth.

Meanwhile, the multitude, who have wonderingly followed and looked on, take scandal, and, inspired perhaps by the carping Pharisees, begin to murmur, saying that He who calls Himself the Messias is "gone to be a guest with a man that was a sinner." With one perhaps who *was* a sinner but is so no longer. For, as Zachaeus listens to the gracious words that fall from the Saviour's lips, his heart is stirred within

him, he sees the disorder of his life and discerns what a snare the love of money has been to him.

So, rising and standing forth before all that company, he says to his Divine Guest: "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wronged any man of anything I restore him fourfold."

It was as if the converted publican would say: "Lord, to show my appreciation of Your gracious kindness in being my guest this day, I am ready to make a sacrifice of what I value most, so I here make over to the poor one-half the fortune I have honestly accumulated, and that not a penny of ill-gotten gains may remain in my possession, I engage to make, according to the full rigor of the law, fourfold restitution to every man that I have overreached."

Thereupon the Saviour blesses and accepts the sacrifices His host is making and, with the words: "This day is salvation come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham," pronounces over the repentant Zachaeus words of absolution.

The Gospel story of this converted publican indeed stops here, but a pious tradition tells us that Zachaeus subsequently left his

toll-booth for good, became a disciple of the Master, and died finally the Bishop of Cæsarea.

How richly rewarded in the end was the revenue collector of Jericho for earnestly entertaining that first desire of merely seeing our Lord! Of what little account, too, Zachaeus made the jibes and jeers of the multitude or the scornful laughter and biting jests of the Priests and Pharisees, as he climbed the sycamore in his resolute determination to catch at least a glimpse of the publicans' reputed Friend. The little tax-gatherer had sought but the privilege of seeing the Lord, "who He was," yet how much more did he receive than he had even dared to expect. For our gracious Saviour, far from quenching, is so eager to bring to a bright glow the smoking flax that he who hoped only to see the Lord had God's eyes of mercy turned upon him, was addressed by name, and even chosen out of all the men of Jericho as His host; for Jesus *had* to abide in the publican's house, nowhere else would do. In return, moreover, for the cordial welcome He received, our Redeemer taught Zachaeus the worthlessness and danger of great possessions, strengthened him

to cut off completely, by an act of high renunciation, the occasion of his sin, and, grace following grace, then came the call to the discipleship, and finally the promotion by St. Peter to the episcopate.

To be permitted to show the Lord of all such hospitality was surely a high honor for Zachaeus, and we present-day Catholics are wont, perhaps, to envy the tax-gatherer of Jericho his good fortune. But we need feel no envy. For the opportunity of entertaining our Blessed Lord, which Zachaeus had but once, we have every day. Jesus is quite as eager to be our hearts' Guest now in Holy Communion as He was of old to abide in the house of the publican. It is we who are wanting in hospitality.

Instead of receiving our Saviour joyfully, as did Zachaeus, do we not often churlishly shut the door in his face? To prepare for frequent Communion we are not ready to make any of the sacrifices that little tax-collector made so cheerfully. For instance, if we were but half as eager as he to see our Lord, we would come to Mass on some days besides Sunday. Then, too, if we were not in such craven fear of what others would say or think of us, we would emulate,

in our desire to see the Saviour more clearly, a little of that lofty scorn of ridicule and criticism which Zachaeus showed when he mounted the sycamore tree.

Just as the Jericho publican teaches us how to conquer generously the obstacles that would keep us from becoming frequent communicants, he is also an admirable model for us of that thankfulness to God for all His mercies that Christian hearts should feel. Zachaeus showed such solid gratitude for the visit of our Lord that he merited to receive, as we have seen, even greater favors.

Nothing dries up more quickly the fountains of God's bounty than "benefits forgot." Though, fortunately for us, our Heavenly Father is kind even to "the unthankful and the evil," how much kinder must He be to the grateful and the good! We are incessantly begging favors from God, but how rarely we acknowledge the myriads we receive! How often, for example, are priests asked to say a Mass petitioning boons from Heaven, but how seldom one of thanksgiving for benefits received!

Yet we well know how odious ingratitude is. It is the one vice of which men never boast.

It is the injury they find it hardest to forgive. We are aware, for instance, how we would eventually act towards a person who day after day received from us manifold kindnesses, yet never made us the slightest acknowledgment of them. Why, the baseness of man's ingratitude was one of the few things that seemed to surprise even the all-knowing Son of God Himself. For example, after He had completely restored to health ten wretched lepers, whose loathsome, incurable disease had made them shunned by all, and when but one, and he a Samaritan, came back to thank the Divine Physician, our Saviour asked in pained wonder: "Were there not ten made clean? Where are the nine?" so deeply was He wounded by their ingratitude.

Now, we all owe God a debt of thanks like that of the lepers, since our life, health and happiness, every gift and blessing, indeed, whether of soul or body, that we enjoy are gifts from His bountiful hand. Even the misfortunes, so called, that God has permitted to befall us, we should really thank Him for, since they have purified our souls, detached us from creatures and drawn us nearer to Him. How mercifully God has

dealt with others we cannot always determine, but as regards our own selves, when we remember how often we have offended Him by sin, all must own that we have been treated far better than we deserve, since even His chastening hand has ever been that of a compassionate Father. It is God's desire, moreover, as St. Paul reminds us, to find our hearts always grateful. "In all things give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you all."

But if, though keenly realizing our indebtedness to Almighty God, we despair of making Him any adequate return, Zachaeus will teach us how to show our gratitude fittingly. For after surmounting the first difficulties in seeing our Lord, by getting up for Mass, we must then, like the little tax-collector, receive our Lord into the house of our hearts "with joy." If it is a pleasure to our Lord to enter even a cold heart, provided only it is clean, how delighted He must be to receive a warm and joyful welcome when He visits us!

This we shall best show Him by striving to realize what a priceless blessing we have in possessing God Himself as the Guest of our souls, and then acting accordingly. If

it be asked how we should act in accordance with this realization, a further study of the Jericho publican's conduct will teach us. Just as he showed his gratitude for our Saviour's visit by standing up before all His mocking fellow-townsmen to bind himself to give in alms half the riches that had been a pitfall to him, and to make ample amends to those he had wronged, we also must aim in our thanksgiving after Communion to be, above all things, practical, and like Zachaeus show the sincerity of our gratitude at having God as a guest by offering Him some act of generosity or renunciation. In this connection, St. John Baptist de la Salle advises the communicant to "call to mind the thing which he usually finds the hardest in God's service and to reason with himself thus: 'Here is God giving Himself to you; will you not give yourself entirely to Him? And since it is that particular sacrifice which He cares for, will you not overcome yourself for His love?' "

Besides this practical thanksgiving after receiving our Lord which Zachaeus teaches us, there is the incomparable means of thanksgiving to God for all His mercies which Holy Communion is in itself. Since Jesus lives on

our altars mainly to be the Food of our souls, the fitting way of showing our gratitude for His Divine condescension is to receive Him as often as we can. Now, since it is every day that we are recipients of His bounty, daily also, as is becoming, we should give Him thanks, and there is surely no better way of expressing this gratitude than by going to Communion every morning.

Finally, if joyfully receiving on but one occasion our Lord as a Guest made Zachaeus deserve to hear Christ saying: "This day has salvation come to this house," those surely who entertain in the chamber of the heart this Divine Visitor every day of their lives, will not only merit salvation as a reward, but will experience besides such a constant growth in holiness and such a continual deepening of their sense of gratitude to God for all His loving-kindness toward them, that our Heavenly Father on His part will be daily more disposed to grant them greater blessings still.

THE SANGREAL

THOSE who have read thoughtfully in Tennyson's "Idylls of the King" or in Sir Thomas Malory's "Morte D'Arthur" the beautiful legend of the Holy Grail have doubtless noted in the story many lines and passages that are strikingly applicable to the Blessed Sacrament. The Holy Grail or Sangreal was the chalice consecrated by our Blessed Lord at the Last Supper and was also used, according to an old tradition, to receive the Precious Blood of Christ when He was nailed for our advantage on the bitter Cross.

As time went on, however, the legendary Grail began to be identified with the Divine Eucharist; for historically they are intimately connected, and they have besides many properties in common. Just as the Sangreal, for example, was entrusted to the keeping of angels, could be seen only by the pure of heart, and healed with its touch the body's maladies, the Holy Eucharist in like manner is guarded by virgin priests, worthily received by those alone who are free from grave sin, and is meant to cure every sickness and infirmity of

the soul. "Three angels bear the Holy Grail," sings Sir Galahad,

> "With folded feet, in stoles of white
> On sleeping wings they sail";

while the healing qualities of the sacred Cup are shown in Malory's quaint account of the sick knight who prayed as the Sangreal appeared: " 'Fair, sweet Lord, which is here within this holy vessel, take heed unto me that I may be whole of this malady.' And therewith on his hands and on his knees he went so nigh that he touched the holy vessel and kissed it, and anon he was whole; and then he said: 'Lord God, I thank Thee, for I am healed of this sickness.' "

A vision of the Grail in its unveiled splendor was vouchsafed, however, only to stainless souls like the sister of Sir Percival, a nun as "pure as snow," and to the "Knight of Heaven," Sir Galahad, who kept so

> "Fair thro' faith and prayer
> A virgin heart in work and will."

The holy Cup of healing was seen also by "Sir Percival the pure" once he had learned humility, also by Sir Bors, "the ever loyal man and true," and even to the sin-stained

Lancelot, because he was tireless in the Quest, there came as a prevenient grace a momentary vision of the Grail, though veiled and covered, which brought him to repentance and a good death. Sir Gawain, however, the "reckless and irreverent knight," saw not the vision at all, nor did any of those of course who, out of an ignoble love of ease, failed to take up the Quest.

In the "table round," moreover, where there was no place of special honor, who cannot discern a close resemblance to the altar-rail at which Christians kneel in perfect equality? Those, too, who have adopted the practice of frequent Communion are like the men of Camelot that dine with their king not only on high feasts but every day, and thus gain strength to live lives in keeping with the rank and dignity of Knights and Ladies of the Holy Eucharist. For on the armorial bearings of the frequent communicant could be fittingly inscribed the motto *"Noblesse oblige,"* as no one is more bound than he to live a life in keeping with his lofty dignity.

Daily communicants, indeed, attend every morning, it may be said, a school of chivalry not unlike those maintained at the courts of medieval kings. For when we receive we

place our hands as it were in Christ's and make an act of homage promising to be "His men," to render Him loyal service, and to be valiant, generous, truthful and courteous. For this noble offering we gain in return the friendship and protection of no less a person than the King of Heaven. Or we may consider the solemn oath we take at the altar-rail to be like that the legendary Arthur exacted of all who sat at his board:

"To reverence the King as if He were
Their conscience and their conscience as their
King;
To break the heathen and uphold the Christ.
To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,
To speak no slander—no, nor listen to it.
To honor his own word, as if his God's.
To lead sweet lives of purest chastity."

Now would not the communicant's constant endeavor to keep these promises seem to be both the best of preparations for receiving worthily every day and likewise the most acceptable thanksgiving possible for beholding each morning the vision of the Holy Grail?

The Knights of the new "Table Round" will "reverence the King," for example, by never allowing the familiarity and frequency

of their intercourse with His Divine Majesty to make them remiss in preparing for the daily Banquet. Each Knight's conscience, moreover, from being enlightened every morning by the flood of grace that bursts from the Holy Eucharist, will be a safe guide that he will follow with confidence.

Those, also, who partake daily of the King's table will victoriously "break the heathen" or the power of sin in themselves and in the world about them. For it is paynim sin that loosens the armor, weakens the hand and dulls the weapons of the Christian warrior. Each Communion, however, that he worthily receives rivets anew his helmet, shield and breast-plate, gives strength to his arm and puts into his grasp "Excalibur, a huge cross-hilted sword wherewith to drive the heathen out." But this "old man of sin" is so strongly intrenched in human hearts and so crafty and resourceful too, that the breaking of the heathen is not a battle which lasts merely a day or two, but rather a war that goes on without cessation for years and years. So those who would conquer should every morning find at the Table Round new courage for the combat. Those surely who seek daily the vision of the Grail can say with Sir Percival:

"In the strength of this I rode
Shattering all evil customs everywhere,
And past thro' pagan realms and made them
mine,
And clashed with pagan hordes and bore them
down
And broke them all, and in the strength of
this
Came victor."

For valiant Knight of the Holy Eucharist "to uphold the Christ" will also be an easy task. Receiving daily gives the soul not merely a "momentary likeness to the King" but stamps it again and again with His image. These sacred lineaments, moreover, will be kept sharply outlined by the faith communicants show in coming every morning to the Table Round, while the "large, divine and comfortable words" with which our Saviour is then wont to address His worthy Knights will teach them how to achieve consistently in their lives the high purpose of the King and do His holy will with joy. *"Regis ad exemplum,"* runs the Latin line, *"totus componitur orbis."* As the king is, such will be the people. Never was this proverb more apposite than when the King in question is

our Blessed Lord and daily communicants are the people. For is not the chief result of often receiving our gradual conversion into Christ? As the Holy Eucharist makes our souls each morning more and more like His, we learn to think and talk and act as He would.

Nor can anyone be better prepared than is the daily communicant "to ride abroad redressing human wrongs," by doing deeds of goodness and mercy to those with whom his lot is cast. Such actions never return to the doer void. Their influence is everlasting. Those who receive kindness show their gratitude by being kind to others.

"To speak no slander, no nor listen to it.
To honor his own word as if his God's"

will also be virtues as conspicuous in the new Knights of the Round Table as they were of old in King Arthur's high-minded companions. "Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth," those will say with whom the daily communicant has to do, "even thy speech doth betray thee." For the tongue daily hallowed by the touch of Christ's body will be tender of a neighbor's reputation, while the "communication of the breaking of bread" establishes a

sacred bond among all who partake of the altar. They become in deed and truth the Eternal King's *companions,* a word which from its derivation means bread-sharers. They are made by Communion the guests of God. Just as those who always dine together beneath the domestic roof-tree know how to pardon and overlook in one another many things on which strangers would put a bad construction, in like manner the Knights and Ladies of the Holy Eucharist will not only "speak no slander," but from being known to have no ear for detraction or calumny will seldom be exposed to the temptation of listening to it. Their own word too will always be held in honor because daily Communion gives the courage to speak the truth. It is only cowards that are liars.

The promise, finally, of King Arthur's followers "to lead sweet lives of purest chastity" also finds its counterpart in our Knights of the Eucharist. It was the vision of the Holy Grail, we read, that drove Sir Percival from

"All vainglories, rivalries.
And earthly heats that spring and sparkle out . . .
. . . And waste the spiritual strength
Within us, better offer'd up to Heaven."

"I myself and Sir Galahad," he again avers, "for a strength was in us from the vision," overthrew so many adversaries that all the people marvelled. Galahad, the most successful of Arthur's knights in the sacred Quest, could boast:

"My strength is as the strength of ten
Because my heart is pure."

Yet it was his longing for the sight of the Sangreal that kept him chaste; for he knew that the Quest could not be achieved except by virtuous living. In the strength of the vision, therefore, young Galahad resolutely turns away from the "loathely damsel" who roams through the world doing harm to men; in the strength of the vision he overcomes the "knights of darkness" who impersonate the seven deadly sins; in the strength of the vision, he sets at liberty the captive maidens, representing the active virtues, who come forth to "beautify and bless the world with all manner of godliness."

Sir Lancelot, on the other hand, who had festering in his heart a sin of impurity, is notwithstanding reckless enough to vow the Quest; but finds himself "beaten down by mean knights" whom the mere moving of his

"WHENCE CAME THE VICTORIES OF THE MAID?"

sword had once been enough to frighten from him. The lion that stood in Lancelot's path was his uncleanness. It was this sin, too, that left him "alone and thirsting in a land of sand and thorns."

The only "siege perilous" at the Table Round of our Eternal King, be it remembered, is that those in mortal sin are rash enough to take. For such communicants "lose themselves" indeed by "eating and drinking judgment," and "not discerning the Body of the Lord," thus filling with sadness and pain the Heart of the King. How sorely too it must grieve Him to find bare and empty many places at His Board where Knights and Ladies who have since given up the practice of frequent Communion used to gladden His eyes by receiving every day!

Finally, let it never be forgotten that the Holy Grail, the legend to the contrary notwithstanding, has by no means passed from the earth. Though the Church for excellent reasons no longer offers the Cup to the laity, it is from a vessel in appearance quite like a Chalice that she gives them Communion. So this Sangreal, when borne to the Table Round by angel-hearted ministers, will be a vision granted daily to the Knights and Ladies of the

Holy Eucharist. More, however, is vouchsafed them than a mere vision of the Grail. The Sacred Blood of Christ becomes their refection, their medicine and their purification. So Knights and Ladies of His Round Table may at Communion time profitably reflect that they are being nourished by the ruddy Grail from which is ever flowing, since Calvary's day, the cleansing, saving stream that imparts to the Sacraments all their efficacy, that washes away the sins of the world. If but a momentary vision of the Holy Grail gave strength against their enemies to Galahad and Percival, what signal triumphs over the foes of their salvation may not those expect who are vouchsafed indeed a similar vision, as often as they see the Chalice lifted up at Mass for adoration, but, more highly privileged still, may even share daily at Communion in the true Cup of light and strength and healing? Thus will the Knights and Ladies of the Holy Eucharist be enabled to keep their hearts, like the "Castle of the Grail," "full of good odors" which spread abroad everywhere the fragrance of engaging virtues and bring

"Glory and joy and honor to our Lord,
And to the Holy Vessel of the Grail."

"GOD WITH US"

THOSE who go daily to Holy Communion are naturally eager to maintain that fervor in receiving our Lord which they experienced perhaps when they went to the King's Table less frequently. They are determined to go to the altar every morning without fail; yet they wish to communicate devoutly, and while using this sacred privilege so often, to avoid the monotony and weariness of routine. Perhaps the best way of shunning the danger is to vary constantly in the mind's eye the aspect under which our Divine Redeemer comes to us. In the Holy Eucharist, we must remember, the myriad beauties of His character are just as attractive as we find them in the Gospels. In the Tabernacle, moreover, He is now occupied with the same activities that engaged and interested Him in the days of His flesh. Each morning, therefore, as I start for church or chapel to attend Mass I will picture the Saviour in some special phase of His character, at some particular period of His life or doing some well-known work of His Public Ministry. The holy Evangelists have left me so many faithful portraits

of Him that, according to my mood or fancy. I can bring before me a living image of Christ as He continues in my soul the same work He did among the people of Syria. He lets me enjoy, no less truly than did the Apostles themselves, His counsel and companionship. I am as highly favored as the multitudes who heard our Lord's words or saw His miracles. For in Holy Writ I can read the narrative of what He said or did and then receive in my very heart the divine Person by whom the parable I love was preached, or the miracle I marvel at was worked, and then hear Him saying to me like words or effecting in me similar cures.

This is the romantic aspect, so to speak, of our Lord's Eucharistic life. He lives over again for me the days at Bethlehem and the years at Nazareth. He permits me to see Him healing and comforting the people. He lets me experience a continuation of the first Paschal week. He is so gracious that He seems to yield to my whim or caprice by entering my soul at Communion time in precisely that character I would have Him come, or discharging for me just that office I desire. My divine Counsellor points out during this visit what a contrast His way of acting offers to

mine, and shows me how different my motives are from His. Moreover, along with the flood of light He throws on my soul's weaknesses, He gives me the strength to carry out His suggestions and to correct my faults.

When preparing to receive Communion let me picture my Saviour, for example, at the beginning of His earthly career. How similar is His sacred Infancy to the life He leads in the Holy Eucharist! Even as Mary's "Be it done to me" brought Christ down from Heaven for the first time, a like "jewel five words long" whispered in the Mass at the Consecration brings Him to a thousand altars every hour. As His human nature once existed without a natural personality of its own the accidents of the Host are supported by no substance of their own. He is wrapped in the snowy swaddling clothes of the species, He sleeps in the pyx a mystic sleep, He is offered daily in the temple, kings and peasants come with gifts to adore Him, and not once but often is He found in my soul's temple, the body, promoting His Father's business.

His Hidden Life He also continues in the Eucharist, for silence, poverty, toil, submission and obscurity are the marks of His presence there. His voice never breaks the stillness

of the Tabernacle; so destitute is He that whatever adorns His sanctuary is the free gift of adorers; on the altar He is constantly occupied "converting the sinner, making perfect the saint, keeping the ordinary Christian in the way of God's commandments, raising all our hearts to that one Heart which is the centre and source of grace and love"; He obeys promptly the behests of His priests; He preserves so deep a disguise that by most men it is never penetrated.

Therefore when I need to learn lessons of patience, meekness and humility, I should receive my Saviour as the Toiler of Nazareth. Have I been tried, for instance, by the ingratitude and inconsiderateness of others? Then I shall seek in Communion the "Carpenter's Son" whose work was often criticised and disparaged. Do I suffer from poverty? I will invite into my heart Him who was born in a stable, lived like the poor, and labored for a pittance. Is my work hard? Every day I will refresh myself with Him who labored for long hours at a bench day in and day out for at least eighteen years.

In the Holy Eucharist, too, how wonderfully renewed and continued are the works of His Public Ministry! The miracle of Cana

is recalled by the manner that the weak water of my human nature is changed by Communion into the rich wine of Christ's Divinity. Just as He called Peter, James and John to the Apostolate, whenever I receive He summons me to leave forever the nets of sin, wherein I have been so often enmeshed and follow Him in holiness of life. I come to my Saviour unclean, afflicted or diseased, and I depart cleansed, comforted or restored to health. Indeed the kindness, mercy and beneficence that were conspicuous in our Lord's conduct during the Three Years, I now see exercised towards me, as often as I go to the Holy Table.

So by using my imagination as I prepare for Communion, I can behold being wrought in my soul cures like that of the Centurion's servant, if my faith is but half as strong as that pagan soldier's; when I cannot "look upwards at all," Christ will touch me and, as was the crippled woman, I shall at once be "made straight"; if I am possessed by an impure spirit, the "Holy One of God" will need but to say: "Go out of the man!" and I shall soon be found sitting at Jesus' feet and in my "right mind"; or all fervor and devotion may be dead in me, but Christ will take my

hand, as I receive Communion, and say: "Maiden, arise!" and as happened to the little daughter of Jairus, my "spirit" will return, I shall rise immediately and run with eagerness the way of perfection; or I would fain be rid of some evil propensity, that I have had far longer than twelve years, so I will touch not merely the hem of my Saviour's garment, as did the woman suffering from an incurable issue of blood, but I will receive His sacred Body within my very soul, and then hear Him say to me: "Be of good heart, daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole."

I may even have re-enacted for me at Communion time, should there be need, the stilling of the tempest. The passions may be so fiercely raging in my breast that I cry out in terror: "Master, doth it not concern Thee that I perish?" and the Lord will awake and say: "Peace, be still," and in my heart there will at once be "a great calm"; or I may have labored at some important work "all the night long" and yet have accomplished nothing, so I come weary and discouraged to the altar-rail to hear Christ bid me "Launch out into the deep," where success will reward my efforts; or He who placed in a fish's mouth the stater St. Peter

needed to pay the Temple tax, will give me light at Communion on the solution of economic problems that perplex me.

Should I prefer, however, when I receive, to picture my Redeemer enduring His Passion or submitting with patience to the dishonor that is so often shown Him in the Blessed Sacrament, I can bring comfort to His Heart by offering Him a Communion of reparation, promising to make amends, by the fervor of my life, for the bitter disappointment I have caused Him in the past. Or should my mood incline me rather to share with Him the joy of His Risen Life, He will impart to my soul at Communion as much as He can of the radiance that makes Him so fair and beautiful and will sow in my body the seeds of immortality.

"Thus our Saviour renews all the mysteries of His life in the Holy Eucharist—but not the Ascension, for He does not leave us. No! His presence in the Tabernacle compensates us for being separated by time and place from the blissful days of His earthly life. We need not wish ourselves in the Promised Land nor back in those happy days when all flesh saw the salvation of the Lord; for here we have Nazareth, Bethlehem, Thabor, Jeru-

salem, Calvary, and the Holy Sepulchre. Without faith it would be of no use to have been a contemporary and witness of our Lord's life; and faith is easier for us now than it was then, because we have incomparably more motives for it."

Many of the parables, too, if I but learn to apply them adroitly to myself, will provide me with a wealth of appropriate thoughts for my morning Communion. Whatever pains I take trying to find the lessons there are for me in these similitudes of Christ will be richly rewarded. He spoke them no less for me than for those who first heard them. Applications that I work out for myself will profit me more than those made for me by others, and will also be more highly valued. Let me exercise my ingenuity, then, in trying to discern just how my soul is the pearl of price that the heavenly Merchant comes seeking in order to make it wholly His; or how incomparable a "Neighbor" this Good Samaritan proves Himself to one so long a stranger to Him as I and so bitter an enemy of His people; or what a tireless and devoted Shepherd He shows Himself to a silly, wayward sheep; what a loving and forgiving Father to a graceless prodigal; what a patient

cultivator of a barren figtree; what a princely Host to a wretched beggar.

Success in avoiding monotony some daily communicants also achieve by asking themselves as they prepare: "Who comes? To whom? Why?" They receive our Lord to-day, for example, as a Teacher coming to instruct a dull pupil; to-morrow as a king accepting the homage of His rebellious subject; again as a Captain pardoning His cowardly soldier; as a Master rewarding His worthless servant; a Physician curing His dying patient; or a Bridegroom forgiving His disloyal spouse. In using this method of preparation the thoughts I entertain and the words I employ must of course be in keeping with the character I assume.

A short phrase, or even a word, from the Sacred Scriptures will sometimes bring to a glow the heart of the daily communicant. "Can you drink of the chalice that I drink of?" Christ may ask us, and with the sons of Zebedee I resolutely answer, "I can—with Thy grace." "Look and make it according to the pattern that was shown thee in the mount," may suggest a hundred practical reflections to one who ascends daily the hill of Eucharistic sacrifice where Jesus teaches

all His virtues in so striking a manner. "He is thirsty to be thirsted after," words of St. Gregory Nazianzen, may make me realize the longing for more numerous and fervent daily communicants He now feels who once cried out: "If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink," with the result that I shall be less disposed to omit a Communion or to receive with tepidity; or "The Chalice that My *Father* has given Me, shall I not drink it?" may be another text to excite my devotion when I find myself coming listless and sad to the King's Table. "According to your faith, be it done unto you," will be a constant warning that the graces I derive from Communion are exactly proportioned to the strength and fervor of my belief in the Real Presence. To move my heart to compunction for the disloyalty toward my divine Friend of which I have been so often guilty, I will prepare myself for the morning Banquet by hearing Him tenderly reproaching me with the words: "If My enemy had reviled Me, I would verily have borne with it. And if he that hated Me had spoken great things against Me, I would perhaps have hidden Myself from him. But thou, a man of one mind, My guide and My familiar, who didst take

sweetmeats together with Me; in the house of God we walked with consent;" or when Communion time sees me depressed and discouraged owing to "combats without, fears within," I will cry out with confidence: "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" or if my heart is cold and dry I may warm and stir it a little by recalling that, "at the presence of the Lord the earth was moved, at the presence of the God of Jacob: who turned the rocks into pools of water, and the stony hills into fountains of waters."

It will doubtless stimulate devotion, moreover to offer my Communion each day for some particular object. Is there a virtue you sadly need? Receive to gain it. Are graces desired for a friend? This morning's Communion may win them for him. Is a temporal favor required? The prayers I say while my Creator is enthroned in my heart may prevail. But besides using Holy Communion to further my personal and private interests, let me offer it now and then, with a thoroughly Catholic breadth of vision, for the triumph of the Faith, for the exaltation of the Church, the conversion of unbelievers,

the repentance of sinners, the peace of nations, or for the spread of daily Communion. On my fervor in receiving tremendous issues may depend. In distant quarters of the world graces may be granted or denied according to the measure of the love and purity I bring to Holy Communion. For are not Christ's faithful all members of one body and do they not assist one another by their prayers and good works?

By using such expedients and aids as the foregoing we should be successful in quelling the fear of "routine" that now keeps so many from taking up the practice of daily Communion. We shall then go to Mass every morning filled with a fresh wonder at the humility shown by the God of power and majesty in becoming at Communion the very Food of our souls. Not Transubstantiation, we shall perceive, but the Divine Condescension, rather, is the real mystery of the Holy Eucharist. God's love has betrayed His wisdom. In His eagerness to be always as near us as possible, He has actually made Himself our daily Bread, and employs a hundred artifices to induce us to receive Him every day. The ruddy glow, for instance, of the sanctuary lamp, "the forget-me-not of

God," continually reminds us of His presence in our churches; as often as He can, He draws us to Mass; He sends us letters by His holy Vicar begging us to show Him daily the hospitality of our hearts; for Jesus of Nazareth, the Lover of souls and the most amiable of the sons of men desires nothing so much as the privilege of entering the hearts of His creatures every day. Who then can deny Him?

THE BREAD THAT FAILS NOT

HAD we been with our Blessed Lord by the Sea of Galilee on a certain day during the third year of His public ministry we should have witnessed a striking scene. Christ is standing with His Apostles in the little plain that lies between hills and lake, while great multitudes are gathering from far and near to see the Wonder-worker and to hear His teaching. With them they bring all friends and relatives that are lame, dumb, blind or maimed, and cast them confidently at the Saviour's feet. Immediately numberless miracles are wrought; for at the mere touch of His hand all the afflicted are restored to health, while the people who behold the marvels glorify the God of Israel.

Bound by the spell of our Lord's winning personality, and in their eagerness to hear His word, oblivious of everything else, the throng tarries by the lakeside till all the provisions they have brought with them are gone. Their needs, however, do not escape the pitying eye of Christ.

"I have compassion on the multitude," He says to the disciples, "because they continue

"I WILL NOT SEND THEM AWAY FASTING, LEST THEY FAINT IN THE WAY."

with Me now three days, and have not what to eat; and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way; for some of them come from far off."

"Whence can anyone fill them here with bread in the wilderness?" the Apostles inquire.

"How many loaves have you?"

"Seven, and a few little fishes."

Our Blessed Lord then commands the multitude to sit upon the grass-covered ground, and taking, as on a former occasion, the loaves and fishes, He gives thanks and passes the viands to His disciples, who set them before the people. Then, wonderful to see, that multitude of four thousand men, with women and children in proportion, eat of the loaves and fishes till they have had their fill, and gather up, when the meal is over, seven baskets of fragments.

Thus took place the second miracle of loaves, similar indeed in many respects to our Lord's first multiplication of bread and fishes, but somewhat richer, as narrated by the Evangelists, in little touches and details, which indicate that our Blessed Lord meant the miracle to typify in a special manner the healing and consoling offices of the Divine

Eucharist. The other multiplication of loaves which Christ had wrought, perhaps in the same spot, some weeks before, had also foreshadowed of course the Blessed Sacrament; the explicit promise He had made in the synagogue of Capharnaum to give the world His Flesh to eat likewise clearly pointed to Holy Communion; and now this second miracle of the bread is a most striking figure of the nature and purpose of the marvelous Soul-Food that within a year He was to leave His Church.

How like that poor and hungry and afflicted multitude by the Sea of Galilee were most of us before we took up the practice of daily Communion! We were sojourners in a barren desert where little bread was to be had. Our souls were not only weakened and without vitality from the lack of nourishing food, but spiritually we were also lame and blind and maimed and dumb. Our eyes were too dim to see our path; our feet too feeble to walk in it; paralysis had seized our hands, making good works painful to perform and few in number; our ears were too dull to hear God's voice and our speech was so slow and stammering that we could not pray effectively.

Then did our loving Saviour, understanding thoroughly our many needs and touched with compassion for our misery, begin to draw us to the practice of frequent Communion. He had observed our desire to be near Him, our eagerness to hear His teachings, He knew perfectly from how great a distance we had come. Some of us, alas, had journeyed from afar! He saw how poor, weary, sick and disheartened we were, and how sadly in need were our souls of daily food, so exclaiming with pity: "I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way, but I will provide them every morning with Bread from Heaven, having in it all that is delicious and the sweetness of every taste," He said to His earthly representative Pius X the same words that the disciples heard by the Sea of Galilee: "Give you them to eat." So the Holy Father promulgated the decree on Daily Communion. Consequently, for Catholics of every state and condition of life, to go to the Holy Table every day is no longer to be considered anything extraordinary, as a good intention and freedom from grave sin are the only conditions strictly required for receiving worthily and profitably each morning. Moreover, just as

our Saviour fed "four thousand men, besides women and children," that day in the desert, He has now taken care that millions of men and women, youths and maidens, and little children, too, are nourished at the altars of Christendom not only once a week or once a month, but every day.

How much more abundant, too, is this new Bread than was its type! Seven baskets were enough to hold the fragments that remained that evening in Galilee after all had eaten their fill. But like the divine blessing that increased the loaves, the words of Consecration pronounced at Holy Mass instantly bring down from Heaven in such limitless quantities this Bread of Souls that innumerable ciboriums are required to reserve in the Church's Tabernacles the Food that remains even after the hungry have all been fed.

Not only the loaves that our Lord multiplied, it is worthy of note, foreshadowed the Holy Eucharist, but so did the fishes. For the letters of "ichthus," the Greek word for fish, stand for "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour," and the image of a fish, which is of frequent occurrence in the catacombs, symbolized the Blessed Sacrament to those

who understood. For instance, Abercius, a second century Bishop, tells us on his monument that during his journey from Phrygia to Rome he received everywhere as food "the Fish from the spring, the great, the pure," and Pectorius, another early Christian, "speaks of the Fish as a delicious spiritual nurture supplied by the 'Saviour of the Saints.'"

Now, who were the men, women and children who left their homes and hurried to the shore of the lake just to be near our Blessed Lord? Apparently the poor. This is indicated by their destitute condition when the few provisions they had brought with them were exhausted. So it was for the poor that the miracle of the loaves was wrought. Is not the Holy Eucharist, the type's fulfilment, also in a special manner the Sacrament of the poor? Is it not largely for them that the marvel of Transubstantiation takes place so constantly to-day? The poor and lowly seem to value most highly the Blessed Sacrament because they realize better than others their need of it. "The poor shall eat and shall be satisfied." Their destitute state is their chief title to God's bounty. They who stand most in need of

daily Communion are those who reap from it most profit, for the more pitiable is the plight of a beggar, the more alms he gets.

As the Bread of the poor, the Holy Eucharist was shadowed forth perhaps by an incident that happened one Sabbath in Galilee. While passing with Him through a field of ripe wheat, Christ's disciples in their poverty and hunger "began to pluck the ears and to eat," and for so doing were stanchly defended by Him against the carping Pharisees. Did not the Master then have in mind the millions of His poor for ages to come whom he was eager to nourish with the Blessed Sacrament, "the Finest of the Wheat"? As he gazed over the golden corn perhaps Jesus beheld throughout the earth and down the centuries all the fields of grain which the sun's warm rays would ripen, the fire's ruddy flames convert into bread, and the glow of divine love change into the Holy Eucharist that forever more the poor might be fed.

The price, moreover, of the Eucharistic Wheat is always low and is never affected by the failure of crops or the fluctuations of the market. It is

"Bread whose cost doth ne'er increase
Though no rain in April fall."

No matter how dear the bread of the body may become, "the bread of the soul is always cheap, since it was purchased for us at so great a price by Christ our Lord." During His young manhood at Nazareth, indeed, He supported by the work of His hands no one perhaps but His Blessed Mother. "But before He left the earth He became also the great Bread-winner of the human family, giving Himself at the Last Supper as the food for all the souls of men, in the holy Bread of the Eucharist, the staff of life eternal, and then going out at once to earn and to pay its price by the sore travail which began that evening when the sweat was red upon His brow."

Besides being poor, the multitude that flocked around our Lord by the Sea of Tiberias were so sadly in need of guidance, being as sheep without a shepherd, and so many of their number were afflicted with chronic infirmities that the Saviour was moved with divine compassion and "He began to teach them many things" and to heal all their diseases. From His home in the Tabernacle the Heart of Jesus is stirred surely with a like pity for the folly and wretchedness of the multitude to-day, and

longs to have them throng frequently to the altar-rail that He may give their souls the light and health and strength they need.

He knows well how to pity and console, for He understands thoroughly and feels keenly every detail of the trials and afflictions of each one of us. Because He has made and redeemed us, He knows us perfectly. He sees our hearts. "He knows each chord its various tone, each string its various bias," and can sympathize fully, moreover, with us; for He has had actual experience of every pain and sorrow, except sin, that we must endure. Is our soul distressed? Behold our Lord in the Garden of Gethsemani. Do we suffer from physical pain? See Him scourged and crucified. Is our good name attacked? He was reputed with the wicked, and was the laughter and song of the people. Have we been abandoned by friends? He was forsaken by all. "I looked for one that would grieve together with Me, but there was none; and for one that would comfort Me, and I found none," cried our Lord through the mouth of the Royal Prophet. But none of us, however deep his misery, can justly make a similar complaint, because we always have as a Consoler our Divine Saviour Himself,

who longs to have us come to Him at Holy Communion, that He may give us the consolation and guidance we need. "As one whom the mother caresseth," was His promise, "so will I comfort you."

Christ came to Bethlehem, let us remember, for the redemption and sanctification of the whole world. But in His mystic birth on the altar He comes to save and hallow and strengthen some one individual soul. Every Host that is consecrated is destined to rest in the heart of some one person, and for him or her, does our Blessed Lord, Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity, enter that particular Host. God knows in His wisdom the very Host each communicant is to receive, and at the moment of Consecration comes to the Host for that person and for no other. "He is as much yours as though you were the only one in all the world. He understands your character and all your desires, longings and ambitions. He realizes your weakness of will and your defects of judgment, and appreciates exactly the stress which circumstances, environment and affection bring into your life, and when He comes, He comes with just that precise strength, with just those carefully selected graces, which you

individually need, and which He knows you need. He awaits in your bosom, yours alone, listening with divine patience and with all the tender human affection of the human-hearted Saviour, for the narration of your troubles and the enumeration of the petitions which only as God He can answer."

The Holy Eucharist, moreover, besides being a stay to the heart of those who often receive, will be a lamp to their feet and a spur to their zeal. Christ imparts to the soul of the frequent communicant the triple beauty of intelligence, courage and love. "Light, heat and power." These words we might imagine written on the Tabernacle door. Is not the Church's power-house there and is it not at Communion especially that the current of divine grace is distributed to individual souls? The Holy Eucharist gives our souls light when we are in darkness, warmth when we are cold, strength when we are weak. Its energy, moreover, like that of electricity, can be used for many varied purposes. If our hearts, for example, need to be cleansed from the dust of sin, the best means for effecting this is Communion; if our hearts are hot with uncontrolled passions, nothing will cool and quiet them like Com-

munion; if the soul's powers should be directed toward the rooting out of some particular blemish or defect, the current can be applied most advantageously for doing this at Communion. That light for the intellect, warmth for the heart, and strength for the will that we call divine grace and by the help of which all our good deeds are done, all our kind words suggested and all our holy thoughts inspired, is nowhere imparted more abundantly than at Communion. But just as electricity is now in daily use everywhere, Communion should be as widely and as often used for illuminating, warming and strengthening the heart.

If Holy Communion, then, is the Bread of the poor, let them eat it daily; if Holy Communion is the solace of the sorrowing, let them receive it daily; if Holy Communion is the strength of the weak, let them gain it daily; if Holy Communion is the light of the perplexed, let them seek it daily; if Holy Communion is the health of the sick, let them enjoy it daily. But is not the soul of each and every one of us always either poor, or sorrowful, or weak, or sick, or perplexed? Then we should all eat every day of the Bread that fails not.

THE FRIEND DIVINE

"A FAITHFUL friend is a strong defense," observes the Son of Sirach, "and he that hath found him has found a treasure." However richly dowered we may be with friends of this description, however much their worth may make us admire and love them, who has not been forced to deplore, even in the most generous and amiable of friends, the lack of some gift or virtue a perfect friend should have. At such times, perhaps, we picture to ourselves what qualities of mind and heart would belong to an ideal friend. In our mind's eye we see a man possessed of every grace and virtue. He would be one of such holiness that we could always take his conduct as a model for our own. The charm of his personality would lead our hearts captive. His sympathy, too, would be deep and intelligent, because based on a perfect knowledge of our character, and tender and winning from his having had trials and experiences similar to ours. His judgment, moreover, would be so sound that we could always safely follow his counsel, and if, in addition to all these engag-

ing qualities, he were willing and able to soothe our sorrows, repair our losses and right our wrongs, who would not feel that in such a one he had a friend indeed?

But we should here, perhaps, be rudely awakened from our day-dream by the reflection that such a friend as this is an impossibility. Who could unite in himself so many excellencies? Why, our share in Adam's heritage is so large that even our virtues are often unattractive. We are so often vanquished in the daily battle with our own selfishness that constant generosity is rare. Perfect sympathy is quite as scarce, for who can enter so fully into another's varying moods and difficulties as to understand all and so pardon all? Passion and prejudice so often warp the judgment, even of the wisest, that we cannot always follow their counsel. Then, how powerless, as a rule, are our dearest friends to lessen our griefs and lighten our burdens. Are we not generally forced to be content with their expressed desire to do so, and to take the will for the deed?

Nevertheless, there is one perfect friend. There is really living in the world to-day one whose character is a full harmony of all the qualities we would give our ideal friend. His

holiness, for instance, is so peerless that no stain of sin ever touched His soul. He is so amiable and winning that He draws to Himself all men; so generous that to gain and keep His friends He has made most costly sacrifices; so wise that the heart of man and all things else are perfectly known to Him. From this deep knowledge is born a sympathy that can feel for every human care and sorrow, for He Himself has experienced them all; but, more wonderful still, He is always able and always willing to meet and satisfy every longing of the soul.

Surely, all have now guessed who this perfect friend must be; it is Jesus our Saviour, true God of true God, indeed, yet no less truly the gracious Son of Mary. "But centuries have passed," you may say, "since Jesus walked the earth in the guise of man. Had I been living then in Judea I might have had Him for a friend. How hard I would have striven to gain His friendship! Would that He were living now!" Be comforted then, for He is living now, and you can easily become His friend.

Christ took our nature and lived our life, not merely to win and sanctify and save that little band of disciples who dwelt with Him

long ago in Palestine. Looking down the ages, He saw the countless generations yet unborn who would need a friend like Him. Divine love then suggested and Divine power then effected the means to meet this need: Jesus gave us the Holy Eucharist. It is the blessed privilege of Catholics to know by faith that He who once journeyed through Galilee instructing the ignorant, curing the sick and comforting the sorrowful, never really left the world, but is with us now, all human still, yet all divine, too, and that He might continue to-day the same holy work He wrought of old, our Lord has wonderfully hid Himself beneath the sacramental veils. The Holy Eucharist, in a word, is Jesus' love and sympathy forever incarnate for us.

Would a man with an eye to his own interests, on learning that a person like Jesus were living among us to-day, allow much time to pass before he sought out such a one and, having found Him, would he not use every means to win and keep His friendship? By studying the character of Christ, by observing what kind of men were His dearest friends, and by marking their manner of dealing with our Lord, an earnest man would soon learn how to be on such terms of friendship with

Him as to profit to the full by His counsel and sympathy.

It is not hard to find where Jesus lives. In every church at any hour, but particularly during daily Mass, our Lord is ready to meet His friends. Nor is it hard to learn how to study His character. In the Gospel story there is presented the many-sided personality of Christ in all its attractiveness. By observing there the different phases of His character, His ways, His habits, His likes and His dislikes, who His closest friends were, and how they became so, we, too, may learn how to endear ourselves to Him.

Nothing in the Gospels is perhaps more striking than the numerous instances they contain of the human love, the human pity of Jesus and His own longing for the love and sympathy of men. "He had compassion on the multitude," we read of Him, and well they knew where to go for help and sympathy. The sick, the grief-stricken and the sinful came instinctively to Mary's Son for relief, comfort or forgiveness, and were never disappointed.

Our Blessed Lord, moreover, while loving all mankind, also had His more intimate friends, with whom He liked most to be,

to whom He looked with confidence for that sympathy His human nature needed. Such, for example, was the Baptist, such were Mary and Martha and their brother Lazarus, and, even among the Apostles, Peter and James above their fellows, but, most of all, St. John the Evangelist, who does not fear to speak of himself as the "disciple whom Jesus loved."

If these are some of the traits of our Saviour's character as we find it portrayed in the New Testament, they are His traits still. He has not changed. In the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar Jesus is as winning, powerful and sympathetic as when He walked among men. Nay, more so. The sacrifices He makes in abiding always with us indicate a tenderer attachment and a warmer love. He seems readier now than ever to strengthen the weak and comfort the sorrowful. He seems to long more now for human companionship than formerly. For He constantly remains in countless tabernacles expressly to be near us, and submits to all kinds of humiliations in order to meet at the altar-rail, as often as He can, His chosen friends.

This longing of our Blessed Lord, after all, is but an artifice of love, so to speak, to win

our hearts; the most generous souls in the Church, the salt of the earth, are already His; moreover, the self-sufficient God has need of nothing. It is we, rather, who stand in vital need of his friendship. No matter how many faithful friends we may call our own, there are times when a merely human friendship is quite inadequate to meet the wants of our souls. How imperfectly, for instance, do even our nearest and dearest understand us! How often, too, is our soul ruffled on the surface or stirred to the depths by emotions which we cannot express or others comprehend? We can seldom tell even our most intimate friend the entire truth about ourselves. We cannot disclose to him all the unworthy thoughts, all the petty meannesses that throng our souls. Neither can we confess to our friends our want of confidence in them or our selfish lack of sympathy with their joys and sorrows; for friends that are merely human easily take offense at excessive reticence, yet cannot endure from us perfect unreserve.

But there is one Friend to whom we can always tell the whole truth. Jesus alone, of all our friends, can bear the sight of a "naked human heart," because His is the only perfect sympathy. He knows thoroughly every detail

of our lives, He sees clearly the least circumstance of every grief and temptation that befalls us, He bears with us when we can hardly bear with ourselves, and His hand can bring to pass whatever His Heart suggests.

If we have now in a measure brought home to ourselves how desirable it is to be numbered among our Blessed Lord's intimate friends, perhaps we are ready to make use of the most effective means of becoming such. What can these be? Why, frequent Communion, unquestionably. If two friends are wont to strengthen and sweeten their friendship by seeking, every day, if possible, each other's society, to pass some time together pleasantly and profitably in discussing matters of mutual interest, sharing confidences, gaining from each other counsel and sympathy, giving and receiving all those marks, little and great, of kindness, considerateness and self-sacrifice that are the flower and the fruit of true friendship, why should we not act in like manner toward our Divine Friend?

Friendship desires union. Can there be a union closer than that which is formed between Christ and the worthy communicant? Our Lord has said, "He that eateth My Flesh

and drinketh My Blood abideth in me and I in him." Friendship, too, seeks by frequent intercourse to keep this union close and strong. Is not receiving, then, every day the best means of maintaining a warm friendship with Jesus?

If it be true that the chief advantages of friendship, as a philosopher has observed, are peace in the affections, support in the judgment, and aid in all our undertakings, how much nearer the truth must this be of a friendship that is divine? Moreover, since we require daily this peace, support and aid, there is surely no better and easier way of securing them than by daily Communion. By sharing, then, our joys with our Divine Friend we shall double them, and by confiding to Him our sorrows we shall make them less; by seeking His advice just after receiving we can avail ourselves of the very wisdom of God, and through the sacramental strength daily Communion gives to the soul, we have at our command divine power itself.

The wise man of the ancients wished to be always in the company of one better than himself. But it would seem that the daily communicant can have that happiness; there never lived a person more perfect than our

Lord, and yet no one has a surer guarantee of always enjoying the abiding presence of God's grace in the soul than he who receives Communion worthily every day.

Perhaps it has been our experience that the mere recollection of an earthly friend we trust and reverence has often been a source of strength to us in the hour of temptation, and the more spiritual the friendship the prompter we were to reject even a thought that would make us less worthy of that friend's love; a vivid realization of the sorrow he would feel at our weakness has enabled us to stand firm in trial. Then, should not the remembrance that we are actually to meet each morrow in the closest of unions a Friend whose nobility and faithfulness are beyond all praise be a strong incentive for keeping our lips and hands and hearts pure and holy?

Those who have witnessed the ordination ceremony may recall that one of the most beautiful portions of the rite is that following the Communion of the newly made priests, when the Bishop repeats the words our Lord used just after the Apostles' first Communion: "I will not now call you servants, but friends." For friends, unlike master and servants, desire to be equal, to have all things in common,

to keep no secrets from one another. Now, the daily communicant draws as near as a layman can to the lofty dignity of the priesthood. Though he cannot consecrate daily the Host, nevertheless every day, like the priest, he can receive It, and thus become by this sacramental union a closer friend of Christ's, a fuller sharer in His confidences, and a richer recipient of His bounty. After the sacred priesthood, nothing surely will make a man a warmer friend of Jesus than daily Communion.

"Go often to the house of your friend," runs an Eastern proverb, "for weeds soon choke up the unused path." Misunderstandings, coolness and estrangement between friends are often the result, as we know, of infrequent visits, meagre communication or long absence. The health and vigor of friendship with our Lord depends, no less than does a human friendship, upon meeting or corresponding often. The weeds of sin are so often trodden down by the foot of the daily communicant that they can make little headway, whereas nothing is more common than to see estrangement from our Divine Friend follow the neglect of frequent Communion. Success in friendship, as in all things else, depends upon

attention to detail, and it is the little sacrifices, the little acts of appreciation shown on their part by daily communicants that make our Blessed Lord in turn so lavish toward them of His manifestations of friendship.

That longing, finally, in the human heart for a friendship stronger and more enduring than any possible among men, a friendship that moods cannot imperil, change, destroy, or death terminate, can find its legitimate solace only in the love of this Divine Friend, who grows more faithful and true when other friends fail us, and whose friendship will endure forever. "Love Him and keep Him for thy friend who, when all go away, will not forsake thee, nor suffer thee to perish at the last." But to retain forever the strong defense of Jesus' faithful friendship there is surely no better means than going to Communion every day.

"THE BEAUTY OF THY HOUSE"

WHEN David was at last firmly seated on the throne of Israel and "the Lord had given him rest on every side from all his enemies," the shepherd king turned his attention to preparing for the Ark of the Lord a fit habitation. Since the day that holy shrine first fell into the hands of the Philistines, and "the glory had departed from Israel," the Ark had passed through many vicissitudes. To the enemies of the chosen people it had brought nothing but disaster. When the Ark was left in the temple of Dagon his image crashed to the ground, and such scourges attended the progress of the stolen shrine through the land of the Philistines that at last they cried out in terror: "Send away the Ark of the God of Israel and let it return into its own place." So back it was brought, with piacular offerings, to Cariathiarim and into the house of Abinadab, whose son Eleazar was sanctified "to keep the Ark of the Lord." There it stayed for some years, till David had completely overthrown the Philistines. The pious king then had the Ark removed to

the house of Obededom, the Gethite, and during the three months it remained there "the Lord blessed Obededom and all his household."

On learning how much its guardian had prospered "because of the Ark of God," King David determined to make his own palace the home of the holy shrine; so after distributing alms and offering sacrifices he brought the Ark, with great pomp and ceremony, into his royal abode. But as the pious ruler contrasted the weather-worn tent that sheltered the Ark with the roof of polished cedar that made his palace so splendid, he cried out to the prophet Nathan: "Do you not see that I dwell in a house of cedar and the Ark of God is lodged within skins?" David, therefore, would have erected forthwith a magnificent temple as a worthy resting place for the Ark of the Covenant, but Nathan was warned in a dream that God would not accept such a gift from David, because he was a man of war, but from peaceful Solomon, his son. So the Psalmist resignedly gave up his cherished project and devoted himself instead to extending his dominions and conquering new enemies.

God was content, it would seem, merely

with the desire King David had of building a suitable home for the Ark. He did not require its accomplishment. The Psalmist's ardent protest, "I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy house, and the place where Thy glory dwelleth," was more pleasing to the Almighty, apparently, than would have been the most magnificent temple King David could have built.

Now, the Ark of the Covenant, in which was wonderfully preserved, together with the tables of the Law, and Aaron's flowering rod, a measure of the very manna that fed the Israelites for forty years, is of course a manifest type of the Eucharistic Tabernacle. Moreover, all that is said in Holy Writ about the Ark finds a perfect parallel in the Blessed Sacrament. Just as the Divine Presence that sanctified the Ark was the glory, the oracle, the defender, the guide and the comforter of the chosen people, in like manner the perpetual abode of our Saviour in the Holy Eucharist, as all who give the comparison thought will clearly see, is the source of similar but far greater advantages to us.

But may not the Ark also be considered a striking figure of the heart of the frequent communicant? For there, too, are graven

God's Commandments; there also are vigorously flourishing the Church's ordinances, typified of old by the high priest's staff, and there, too, is stored up from day to day that mystical Manna of the soul, the Blessed Sacrament, becoming to individual communicants, as was the Ark to ancient Israel, a spring of wisdom, strength and gladness. Is it not meet and fitting then that the love shown by King David for the beauty of God's house should be emulated by the children of the Resurrection?

It must not be inferred, however, just because the royal prophet's burning desire to build a temple for the Ark was quite as acceptable to God as the accomplishment, that a mere wish on the part of Catholics to keep beautiful the house of their hearts for Him is all that God now requires. No. Our Blessed Lord is eager to have us show, not merely in desire, but in practice also, our love for the place where dwelleth His glory. Consequently, He would have us receive into our hearts as frequently and as fervently as possible the one Person who can always keep them pure and radiant. That this is our Saviour's desire is plain from the decree on Daily Communion He inspired His Vicegerent

Pius X to issue some years ago. For the heart of man, though prone to evil from his youth, can be kept always clean and fair, provided it is made by frequent Communion the abode of stainless Beauty itself.

In the breast, where each morning the new Manna is stored, the proud statue of Dagon that we are repeatedly setting up, will be as often cast down. For does there not really come to the communicant the very God whose Ark alone was once the ruin of false idols? Those thronging temptations of worldliness, cruelty and uncleanness that frequently beset the heart will meet, if we receive every morning, the same fate that befell the fear-stricken hosts of the Philistines when the Ark entered their country. Indeed, the communicant, at the moment of receiving, may well cry out, as did Moses, "when the Ark was lifted up": "Arise, O Lord, and let Thy enemies be scattered, and let them that hate Thee flee from before Try face." If Obededom, finally, in whose house, as we read, the Ark rested but three months, was so wonderfully blessed by God, what a profusion of celestial benedictions will not those enjoy who every day, a whole life through, make their hearts a shelter for the living Bread of which the

manna in the Ark was but a weak and imperfect figure!

Though our Blessed Lord by His very coming makes beautiful His home in our hearts, yet He trusts that the loving zeal of communicants will render fairer still God's favorite abiding-place. The kind of dwelling, our Divine Saviour now prefers is like the chamber He bade Peter and John prepare the night of the Last Supper. Our heart's Guest desires, as of old, "a large, upper room, furnished," in which to eat the Pasch with His disciples. He would have us make the chamber wide and spacious by serving and assisting, as our preparation for Communion, His little ones, the poor, the sick, the sorrowful. It is these that our Lord has appointed to receive, as His representatives, the kindnesses we would joyfully show Him, did He need them now, in order that our guerdon may be the reward exceeding great He has promised those who by faith can see Christ in the destitute and suffering.

Our Divine Redeemer would also have the room He enters at Communion time an "upper" one, high above the noise, impurities and hurry of the street. So our eyes, the windows of the soul, should not be open too

wide, lest the dust of the world enter there and begrime the interior of the house. Nor should our ears, the doors of the chamber, admit too many noises and discordant sounds from the thoroughfare below; otherwise we may not hear the gentle words our Lord speaks to us. Modesty, recollection and peace of soul, that is to say, should be characteristics of the communicant whose house beautiful our Saviour visits daily.

Finally, "the large upper room" into which is often welcomed so royal a Guest as the Son of God, should be "furnished." Not that it must of necessity be sumptuously appointed and richly adorned, for our Saviour's expectations are very modest. The chamber He enters, however, and all it contains, should at least be as neat and clean as the Cenacle surely was made, when Peter and John went forward to prepare the Pasch there. In like manner love and purity, symbolized by the two Apostles, must make ready for Jesus' morning visit the heart of the communicant.

"I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy house," those who receive often should be able to protest with sincerity. The house, indeed, belongs to God, but it has been left

in our care and keeping; and its attractive and homelike appearance depends largely on our good taste and industry. It is also in our power unhappily to give the Owner when He comes a cold and churlish welcome. That discourtesy, perhaps, we have not offered Him, but what real love after all do we show for the beauty of our Saviour's house? His dwelling's glory, we know, is sanctity, which consists in the perfect union of our will with God's. Have we ever experienced that thirst and hunger for righteousness of which the Beatitude speaks? We can doubtless remember having at some time suffered from thirst, or even from the want of food, but has our soul ever felt for holiness anything like the longing the body has for nourishment? Hardly. Has the love, indeed, that we profess for the beauty of God's house even overstepped the bounds of worldly prudence? Our love then is scarcely a passion. Otherwise we should deem the very best we have none too good for God, and bring to His service a generosity and devotedness that would be a constant preparation for Holy Communion.

Indeed, that the best is none too good for God, has ever been a guiding principle in the

Church's history. Is not the longing to offer our Divine Saviour in the Blessed Sacrament all that is fairest and purest and most perfect, the motive that has inspired with their masterpieces many of the world's most gifted geniuses? The Catholics of the Middle Ages, who erected those magnificent shrines and cathedrals that are now the admiration of Europe, built as they did because they felt that nothing is too good for God. The people gave generously of their savings, and architects, painters, sculptors and skilful artists in glass or metal put their best workmanship into whatever was to shelter or adorn our Lord's abiding-place, because they felt that nothing is too good for God. Some of the highest achievements in art, in poetry, in music and in oratory that the world has marvelled at were born of a desire to honor and glorify the Holy Eucharist. Raphael's "Stanza" glows with the majestic "Disputa"; Aquinas, when the Blessed Sacrament is his theme, cannot keep to prose; Palestrina's compositions interpret the liturgy of the Mass; Bourdaloue proclaims with eloquence the marvels of the Real Presence, while in every land, from long ago till now, the Church has been proving by the splendor of

THE DELIGHT OF KINGS.

her ceremonial, the richness of her vestments, and the fineness of her altar plate, her love for the beauty of God's house and the place where His glory dwelleth.

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth," foretold our Divine Lord, "will draw all things to Myself." How wonderfully this prophecy has been fulfilled! For not alone by His elevation on the Cross has He won the adoring love and homage of His followers, but also by His enthronement in the Blessed Sacrament. He has made man and all things else minister to His glory. "It is extraordinary," observes Father Meschler in this connection, "what imposing monuments the Holy Eucharist has erected for itself in the world. It has pressed everything into its service—all the treasures of the earth, all the magnificence of art, and all the inventive power of love. The Eucharistic cult is the centre and acme of our religious service."

Nor is this all. For the Church's more devoted children, not content merely with pouring wealth into their Mother's lap, and adorning her temples with works of genius, show their warmer love for the beauty of God's house by entering, in eager throngs, the sanctuary and the cloister. Nothing, they

are convinced, graces better the place of His glory's dwelling than the virgin hearts, keen minds, and willing hands of youths and maidens who consecrate themselves, without reserve, to the priestly or religious life. Their best they offer God because in giving us His Only-begotten Son, as our Pattern, our Ransom, our Food, the Spring of grace here, and of glory unending hereafter, they see that God has not withheld from us His best.

If their full measure of devotion is not ours to give we should at least show our love for the beauty of God's house by emulating that model hostess of our Lord, St. Mary Magdalene. When He became her Guest, it will be remembered, she brought into the supper-room a box of right spikenard, her most precious possession; she poured it over His sacred feet, and she dried them with her long tresses, her crowning beauty; "and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment." So, if we would have the house of the heart, against the daily coming of its Guest, fragrant with holiness, we must sacrifice each morning, for His sake, some cherished weakness that is lessening in us our love for Christ, and like the Magdalene make reparation in

kind for our sins and shortcomings. It should not be difficult to keep pure and beautiful the scene of so many mystical unions between the soul and her Creator, as is the heart of the frequent communicant. If the spot where Jacob once saw in a vision God's angels going up and down was held a sacred place ever after, how hallowed will not that soul become where God Himself is a daily sojourner!

The best, however, that we ourselves can do to make fair and stainless our heart, that it may ever be a worthy home for its Creator, is poor and feeble compared with what our Blessed Lord will accomplish if we will but allow Him to enter every day. To show a solid and practical love for the beauty of God's house we need only be eager for frequent Communion. During His daily visit Jesus will suggest to us how the home He delights to enter may be made more beautiful still, while the best assurance that we on our part will have the wisdom to accept His suggestions and the skill to carry them out, will likewise be our fidelity to daily Communion.

THE NUN'S THANKSGIVING

I.

"COME, eat My Bread, and drink the Wine which I have mingled for you. Forsake childishness and live and walk by the ways of prudence." These are Thy words of invitation and appeal, O Bridegroom of my soul. Grant me the grace to hear and heed them always. I am resolved, indeed, to share Thy sacred Banquet, as I have this morning, every day I can. For Thou hast taken such pains, it has cost Thee so much, to prepare for me this divine Food, and I am so sadly in need of it, that to refuse Thine invitation would be as unwise in me as unmannerly. Thou didst consent to leave Thy throne of light, to live our human life, to found Thy Church and to endure the sufferings of Thy bitter Passion, that I might thus celebrate with Thee again and again these mystical nuptials. How ungracious and churlish, then, it would be on my part if I did not show by receiving Thee eagerly, my deep appreciation of the honor Thou hast done me!

So I have this morning bade Thee enter my heart again. Be thrice welcome, Lord Jesus, in the poor lodging Thou hast chosen. "It is unclean, but Thou canst cleanse it; it is bare, but Thou canst furnish and adorn it; it is cold and cheerless, but Thou canst kindle therein the fire of Thy love."

There is so much to be done before my heart becomes a dwelling place in any way worthy of Thee! For I am indeed very childish; that more abundant life Thou comest so often to give me, I feel little desire to live; the ways of prudence I have not known. But the time just after receiving, as Thy handmaid St. Teresa reminds me, is the best for petitioning Thy Divine Majesty, since it is then Thy wont to acknowledge in a princely fashion the poor hospitality of our hearts. Moreover, the immediate effect of Communion, as I know, is to give all my prayers a kind of sacramental power and efficacy. So I mean to tell Thee now, though Thou knowest them perfectly already, the needs and longings of my soul and all the graces I seem to require for the success of Thy work in the field where Thou hast placed me.

In my relations first of all with my sister

religious I need a larger and more generous charity. My narrowness is childish. Yet Thou deemest of such moment charity toward my sisters that the extent of its presence and manifestations exactly marks the closeness of my union with Thee. "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples," Thou didst say, "if you have love one for another." How practical a test this could be made! The nuns, moreover, who live beneath this roof are no less my sisters than Thine; for by keeping their sacred obligations they are zealously doing God's will, and "who does the will of My Father in Heaven," was Thy word, "the same is My sister." Moreover, that I may reap an even greater reward of faith, Thou hast made my sisters Thy representatives to receive from me services like those offered Thee of old by Martha and Mary. "I Myself no longer need your ministrations," Thou sayest, "for the days of My visible sojourning among you are past. But with you always are those who do. Show to your sisters for My sake the loving-kindness you would offer Me. I shall be just as grateful for it, and besides the charity, I will generously recompense the faith you exercise while discerning Me in My imperfect little ones."

To each of my sisters who has renounced the world to serve Thee in the cloister, Thou hast promised, O Lord, a hundred-fold return. In the way of houses, brethren, sisters, mothers, children and lands, she is to have, in spite of persecutions, many times as much as she abandoned. The love and care shown her in religion by her sisters and superiors is to make up for the natural affection of her relatives which to some extent she sacrificed when she came to Thee. Now Thou hast entrusted the fulfilment of this promise largely to me. If through my selfishness and coldness any sister of mine is not receiving what was promised her, I am to blame, and like a disloyal bride, shake by my conduct a sister's faith in Thy royal word.

The fair name of my sister religious, Divine Jesus, I know is very dear to Thee. Thou dost invite us to Communion every morning, that by the participation of Thy Sacred Body we may day by day increase our love for one another, and be as tender of a sister's good fame as of Thine own. Yet how often I have spoken slightingly of absent sisters! To mend my ways in this respect let me keep in mind the high example of Thy servant St. Teresa, who could write with truth:

"I never spoke ill in the slightest degree of anyone, and my ordinary practice was to avoid all detraction, for I used to keep most carefully in mind that I ought not to assent to or say of another anything I should not like to hear said of myself." "So it came to be understood that where I was, absent persons were safe." Lord, let me profit by this lesson. Teach me also, Lord, to discern and imitate my sisters' virtues. Blemishes lie on the surface, but perfections often are hidden within, and some penetration is required to find them. Teach me how to put a good construction on the deeds of others. How prone I am to judge only by appearances! Yet Thy life in the Holy Eucharist is a constant warning to me of the folly of so doing. Make me loving, thoughtful and considerate toward my sisters. To be "without affection" I remember, Thy servant Paul set down as one of the marks of the reprobate heathen, and he considers worse than an unbeliever him who neglects those of his own household. Yet how wanting I have been in religious love for my sisters and how remiss in counseling or consoling them in their doubts and difficulties. Divine Jesus, "help me to preserve in all my

words and actions sweetness and humility, evenness of temper, simple obedience, and a cheerful countenance on occasion of contradiction. Help me to make Thy presence within me visible to all, and let others see in me the sweetness of Thy charity, goodness and submission."

With the light Thou hast now granted me give me the strength to follow it at least for to-day. In my sisters let me discern Thee, love Thee, serve Thee, that Thee I may likewise have as my all-sufficient and everlasting guerdon, when I have at last put away for ever the things of a child.

II.

But what I should chiefly draw, O Bridegroom of my soul, from sharing daily in Thy heavenly Banquet is more abundant "life," more fervor and generosity in Thy service. I am listless and tepid and selfish and show Thee but a hireling's loyalty. Yet I am not my own. I belong wholly to Thee. A religious, moreover, cannot, strictly speaking, be generous, for she has already promised all. Dearly hast Thou bought me with Thy Precious Blood, and the bond was wonder-

fully tightened when you accepted me as Thy virgin bride. When as a little child Thou wert offered in the Temple, Thy Blessed Mother by the payment of some sicles bought Thee back. But when I was offered to Thee, the morning of my vow day, no one bought me back; so I am Thine irrevocably. I belong to Thee, to Thy Church, to Thy Congregation. I am not my own. Be mindful then, Lord, of my sacrifice and let me make my holocaust a rich one. Too long has it been poor and lean. A tepid, selfish, religious, I know well, is a clog to the work of her entire Congregation. Graces will be denied my sisters, their work for souls will flag, if I am remiss. No religious lives for herself alone. Her holiness of life promotes sanctity in others, while one careless nun can lower the standard and lessen the spiritual efficiency of a whole convent.

Thou hast given me, O Lord, so many aids and incentives to holiness: My vows, my rule, Holy Mass, daily Communion, the comfort of always knowing Thy will, and the good example of my sisters, who seem to have conspired to make me a saint. Let me not neglect these helps. Grant me the grace to be faithful to the graces Thou givest me,

the spirit of fervor, "the crown of all gifts and all virtues." Give me, O Divine Jesus, "the beauty of holiness, which consists in a tender and eager affection toward Thee, which is what beauty of person is to the outward man, so that through Thy mercy my soul may have, not strength and health only, but a sort of bloom and comeliness." Wean me from the world, turn me to Thee. Teach me how I "may in such manner make use of temporal goods" as to "lose not those which are everlasting." Make me meek and keep me humble, otherwise I shall not find Thy yoke sweet, O Lord, and Thy burden light, as Thou hast promised I should.

Let me so live my daily life, dear Lord, that I may approach Thy Holy Table every morning not only worthily, but with fervor. Blessed Mary from the first moment of her existence Thou didst prepare to be a vessel of honor for Thee. Let everything I do to-day help to make me a more eager hostess of Thee when Thou comest to-morrow. No woman but Mary after all was ever more privileged than I; for dost Thou not become every day my "bosom Friend" indeed?

As beseems, then, so highly honored a maiden, let me be aglow at all times with a

burning love for Thee, O Lord, and a boundless enthusiasm for Thy cause.

As Thou didst hang on the Cross I stood beside Thee, I have often been fond of imagining, and boldly proclaimed myself before that mocking rabble, Thy friend and follower. I have sometimes envied, too, that noble woman who lifted up her voice, while the Pharisees were loudly ascribing Thy miracles to Beelzebub, and courageously cried out: "Blessed is the womb that bore Thee!" Yet every day a score of occasions arise, when simply by keeping my holy rule I can prove myself as loyal a disciple as she, but like a weakling or a craven I sacrifice Thy cause to the clamors of self-indulgence or of human respect. But no longer, dear Lord, shall I be so cowardly a disciple, but with Thy good grace I shall acquit myself hereafter like a valiant maiden, and with Blessed Joan of Arc as my pattern, overthrow the foes of my King.

To-day I also mean to bear witness courageously to Thee, not indeed to the uttermost parts of the earth; that is not required of me, but by the fervor of spirit I bring to all my convent duties. This will show that I am living the full life that daily Communion was

intended to supply. Moreover, this life, being abundant, cannot fail to overflow on others. Just as Thy Blessed Mother no sooner received Thee in her bosom than she sped over the hills to bear Thee to St. Elizabeth and the Baptist, let me prove, dearest Lord, by the happiness I bring to all I meet to-day, that I have learned at Holy Communion to "live," indeed.

III.

By this daily "breaking of Bread," my divine Master, teach me finally how to "walk by the ways of prudence" in the discharge of the duties Thou hast appointed for me. Let me be, first of all, diligent and painstaking in my work. Like the woman of the Book of Proverbs, let me look well to the paths of my house, and eat not Thy sacred Bread in idleness. For Thou hast given me the responsibility of working directly for souls. Thou hast committed to me a flock of Thy beloved lambs to shape and fashion for Heaven, confiding them wholly to my keeping for many hours each day. Teach me, Lord, to realize the responsibility of my task to rise to the dignity of my calling. While

imparting worldly knowledge let me also teach them solid Christian principles that will be their guides and safeguards till they reach Heaven. Make me a prudent and zealous promoter of frequent Communion among Thy little ones. They have the same need, the same right as I to this strengthening Bread. I know how grateful Thou wilt be, if through my help and influence Thou canst gain access every day to their pure young hearts. For Thou wilt reward me even here by making these children diligent, gentle and obedient, and in Heaven, as Thou didst promise a holy shepherdess, by granting me a wonderful increase of glory.

Teach me, dearest Lord, how to make virtue attractive to my girls. Teach me how to lure them by the daily beauty in my own life to a strong and tender love of Thee. But souls must be won before they can be sanctified, and my personal character must first attract those whom I would make more like Thee. Give me a great heart, that I may beget great hearts. Let me keep an unfaltering faith in the essential goodness of my pupils. Let me be a woman of wide sympathy, of broad view, patient, unprejudiced, forgiving, enthusiastic and thoroughly in

earnest. For as a teacher I have a high, apostolic vocation. I am called not only to impart secular learning efficiently, but "to give sight to the blind," "to set free the captive," and to form in the minds of my pupils a strong image of Thee, an image that by coming daily to the altar I must first stamp ineffaceably on my own mind and character. Thus by the influence of a faithful Bride of Christ my children will be led to the love of the Bridegroom Himself, and owing to my constant union with Him my work as a teacher will be blessed with success. Well has it been said, O Lord: "Whatever of dignity, whatever of strength we have within us, will dignify and make strong the labors of our hands; whatever littleness degrades our spirit will lessen them and drag them down; whatever noble fire is in our hearts, will burn also in our work; whatever purity is ours will chasten and exalt it. For as we are, so our work is; and what we sow in our lives, that beyond a doubt we shall reap, for good or for ill, in the strengthening or defacing of whatever gifts have fallen to our lot."

From a keen realization of these truths, my Lord and Master, let me aim in all my

work not merely for efficiency; money can buy that; but besides perfect execution let me keep my motives pure, by fixing the eye of my soul ever on Thee, and having at heart nothing but the advancement of Thy glory. A religious who acts otherwise is guilty of rapine in her holocaust and will merit Thy just anger, for Thou art a jealous God. How joyful, on the other hand, will be Thy congratulations, dearest Lord, and what comfort it will give Thy Sacred Heart, if I can come before Thy throne, when my life's task is ended, and simply say: "Master, I have finished the work Thou gavest me to do, and of those Thou hast confided to my keeping, I have lost not one, for by eating daily of the Bread Thou didst provide me with, I learned to walk by the ways of prudence."

"COME, DRINK THE WINE THAT I HAVE MINGLED FOR YOU."

"LO, THE BRIDEGROOM COMETH"

OUR Saviour's parable of the ten virgins, rich as it is in lessons for all Christians, seems to be particularly applicable both as a comfort and a warning to the frequent communicant. The picture suggested by the parable is a familiar one in the East. A bridegroom, accompanied by a throng of friends, is leading home on the night of the wedding his joyous bride. As the procession draws near the house, a band of gaily clad maidens, singing canticles of gladness and bearing lighted lamps in their hands, joins the bridal party and enters with them the hall of feasting.

In the parable the virgins have grown so tired of waiting for the bridegroom's coming that all have fallen sound asleep. Suddenly the silence of midnight is broken by the cry: "Lo, the bridegroom cometh! Go ye forth to meet him!" At once the startled bridesmaids awake and look to their lamps, which have all but gone out. The five maidens who have wisely brought along a supply of oil soon have their lamps burning brightly again, but the other five, who were not so provident,

take the good advice they get and hurry off to purchase oil. "Whilst they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage and the door was shut," nor was it again opened even to the tearful pleading of the five belated virgins. "I know you not," was the bridegroom's only answer.

Our Blessed Lord, it is plain, spoke this parable to teach me to live in such a way that I may be always ready, when the summons comes, to enter at once the marriage supper of the Lamb. So if I would go in like the wise virgins with the Bridegroom, I must keep the lamp of faith aglow by feeding it with the oil of charity. This, however, I can not well do unless the lamp is always carried in my hands. For the faith that is nurtured by love should show itself in deeds of light, that will be of no less service to me than to my fellow-men, the Bridegroom's friends. Dead faith is of little value, as the foolish virgins found to their cost, nor will the mere performance of external duties without life and without love much avail. In vain those unready maidens cried out: "Lord, Lord, open to us."

Now is not the practice of daily Com-

munion the best means for developing and maintaining a faith as watchful and active as that the prudent virgins showed? Is anyone more likely to be ready for the Bridegroom's last coming than those who are wont to meet Him at the altar every day?

"The Communion I receive this morning may be my viaticum," is a thought that should help me to prepare well for the Bridegroom's daily coming. With what fervor I would welcome Him were it indeed His last visit! But perhaps it is. I cannot tell. If not to-day's, still to-morrow's may be, so I will keep my lamp well trimmed till then, and will be eager to purchase, against the hour of need, rich supplies of oil by showing special kindness and consideration to all I meet to-day. In my expectation of the heavenly Bridegroom I shall live from Communion to Communion, bringing to the altar each morning if I can a warmer love for Christ and all His friends. Throughout the day, moreover, as a long thanksgiving for my Saviour's visit, I shall strive to make my faith in Him flower and fructify into high thoughts, kind words and generous deeds. I am well aware that when my soul is filled with the grace that flows from daily Communion I shall be able,

Midas-like, to change to gold everything I touch. The heavenly merit I am storing up for all the good I think, or say, or do, is measured precisely by the closeness of the union with God that results from the morning Marriage Feast. Consequently to miss even once this daily meeting with the Bridegroom of my soul I shall deem an everlasting loss. I shall value above all things else these spiritual riches; for they are the only possessions I can take with me when I die. The rest I must leave behind. That man who is not rich toward God and stores up nothing save what must be relinquished when his summons comes, divine Wisdom has called a "fool." "Whose things shall those be," let me ask myself, "which thou hast provided?" When I am no more, all my possessions will pass to others, my body to dust, my name to oblivion, my soul to judgment. "What did he leave?" the curious inquire when a man of wealth and prominence has ended his earthly career. "Oh, he left three houses," the answer may be, "$1,000,000 in bonds, a bank account of some $500,000, a wife and three children." Alas, he left them all! God grant he did not come before his Judge with hands quite empty! Warned by such a

solemn thought, may I never relax in my zeal to lay up in Heaven in sacks that grow not old, where moths and rust corrupt not, nor thieves break through and steal, such vast treasures of merit that I shall go to my reckoning with confidence and joy. But of all good works Holy Communion every day is the chiefest and most precious, for besides its own priceless value it suggests and prompts a thousand other deeds of light which I zealously perform with the strength I draw from the King's Table, and the merits of which are mine forever. I must carefully follow in this matter the example of the Saints, for they are our guides and models in all that touches the saving and the hallowing of the soul. Owing to their cleanness of heart they discern divine truths with a more unclouded vision than we. The Lord would come, they knew, like "a thief in the night," and realizing thoroughly the high importance of making a good end, they were never unprepared for their summons.

Whenever I receive Communion, therefore, I must reflect that the day will at length dawn when the Bridegroom comes to me for the last time. Perhaps a messenger will bring Him word, "Lord, he whom Thou

lovest is sick," and the Lord of all will make haste to abide in my house. In the sickroom everything has been made ready to receive Him worthily. A little table covered with spotless linen stands at the bedside, on it are placed lighted candles, a crucifix, holy water and fresh flowers. Then the cry is heard, "Lo, the Bridegroom cometh!" and all kneel down to show Him reverence.

"Peace be unto this house, and unto all that dwell therein," is the Bridegroom's first greeting. "Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, O Lord, and I shall be cleansed," is the prayer I echo. "Thou shalt wash me and I shall be made whiter than snow. Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy." I then make my last Confession, and as I repeat an act of heartfelt sorrow, I hear the words of absolution said, and almost feel the Precious Blood poured on my soul, cleansing it from every stain. Then the friend of the Bridegroom prays that Almighty God may have mercy on me, forgive me my sins and bring me to everlasting life, granting me in His loving-kindness pardon, absolution and remission of all my sins. As I now behold the Lamb of God who has come to take away my sins, I protest with the

centurion my unworthiness to meet Him, but His friend bids me: "Receive the Viaticum of the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ. May He guard thee from the malignant foe, and lead thee to life everlasting!" Then the Bridegroom comes beneath my roof to celebrate for the last time on this earth His mystical nuptials with my soul and a prayer is offered that the Holy Viaticum may be a remedy for all my spiritual and temporal ills.

Now follows that consoling Sacrament that none but those dangerously ill may receive, when each of the froward senses that have so often led the way to sin is anointed with the soothing oil and I hear repeated the prayers of the ritual: "By this holy anointing and by His most loving mercy may the Lord pardon thee whatever through the senses thou hast done amiss." Thus the final vestige of sin is purged away and the soul is fortified for its last combat with the enemy of man.

The end is now near. A crucifix is pressed to my lips as I receive the Apostolic Blessing and the Plenary Indulgence at the hour of death. Then I listen to the friend of the Bridegroom as he reads the Church's beautiful prayers for the dying. "May the noble

company of Angels meet thy soul at its departure; may the court of the Apostles receive thee; may the triumphant army of glorious martyrs conduct thee; may the crowd of joyful Confessors surround thee; may the choir of blessed Virgins go before thee; and may a happy rest be thy portion in the company of the Patriarchs. May Jesus Christ appear to thee with a mild and cheerful countenance, and give thee a place among those who are to be in His presence forever."

That this prayer will be heard what better hope can I have than the remembrance of the numberless times I have offered Him, who is to be my Judge, the glad hospitality of my heart, and look back on a life whose path is brightened, like a lighted way, by my daily Communions? Then with the names of Jesus, Mary and Joseph on my dying lips or sounding in my dulled hearing, I go forth without fear to meet the Bridegroom, hidden now no longer by the white veils of the Host, but standing forth in all His winning beauty. Thus will He welcome to the endless Marriage Feast of Heaven those who have kept themselves prepared for His coming by eating daily of the King's Table.

"THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB"

TWO of our Blessed Lord's parables, the Great Supper and the Marriage Feast, have in them many points of resemblance. In both parables a man of wealth and power makes ready a splendid banquet, to which many guests are summoned; in both parables those who are called refuse or neglect the invitation and occupy themselves with other things; in both parables the host in just indignation then orders his servants to go out into the lanes and highways and bring in all classes and conditions of men, that the supper-room may be filled; in both parables, finally, according to the interpretation of the Fathers, is prefigured the Church's Eucharistic Banquet.

Holy Communion, indeed, is a "Supper" that is "Great" in every respect, for the Host is God, the Food is His Only-begotten Son, the house is the Universal Church, and all mankind are the bidden guests. Holy Communion is, likewise, a Marriage Feast; the Heavenly King thus celebrates the nuptials of Christ, the Heir to the throne, with the

souls of worthy receivers. Unhappily there are many who will not come to this Great Supper often, or attend this Marriage Feast frequently. The proud, the covetous and the pleasure-loving absent themselves still. Just as in the parable his farm fills the mind of one man, his merchandise that of another, and his newly-wedded wife that of a third, in like manner it is self-sufficiency, absorption in business, or the love of ease, that keeps men who could easily do so from coming every day to the Great Marriage Supper of the Lamb. If they did but know the gift of God!

The poor, the feeble, the blind, the lame, and those from the highways and hedges, on the other hand, though they protest earnestly their unworthiness, are the ones whom the Master of the House successfully "compels" to practise daily Communion, by making them realize how much they stand in need of it, and by letting them see the wisdom of sitting at the King's Table every morning in this world, that they may thus be sure of enjoying His Banquet forever in Heaven.

For the parables of the Great Supper and of the Marriage Feast, while symbolizing Holy Communion also point to the everlasting happiness of the Blessed. Without question the

worthy reception of the Divine Eucharist is most intimately connected with eternal life. Indeed our Saviour seldom spoke of the one without mentioning the other. "This is the Bread which cometh down from Heaven," were His words, for example, when promising us the Blessed Sacrament, "that if any man eat of it, he may not die." "If any man eat of this Bread, he shall live forever." "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up in the last day." "He that eateth this Bread, shall live forever." Thus does Christ call attention to the relations that exist between the Holy Eucharist and the life of the Blessed, between our union with Him here and our union with Him in Heaven.

The Church, too, keeps us constantly in mind of this purpose of the Holy Eucharist. "O saving Host, Thou openest to us the gates of Heaven," she sings at Benediction; "O Sacred Banquet," her ritual repeats, "wherein is given us a pledge of future glory." This same thought the Communion and Postcommunion prayers of the Missal express in a wonderful variety of ways; and at the moment the minister of the Sacrament gives us the Sacred Host he says "May the Body of our

Lord Jesus Christ keep thy soul unto life everlasting."

Life everlasting! It is a universal longing of the human heart, and our Creator placed it there. As man was made to enjoy Heaven, he feels constantly a craving to possess infinite good for all eternity. This desire, moreover, I may gratify if I will but use the means God gives me. Life everlasting! It was the earliest prayer He bade me say. At the very font, even before I was baptized the priest asked what I sought from the Church of God, and through my sponsors I boldly answered: "The faith that brings me to life everlasting." Then a few years later, to nourish the faith I received at Baptism, my Saviour fed my soul again and again with His Blessed Body, the Food of life everlasting, and now He urges me to take this Medicine of immortality every morning that my spirit may be so well preserved from the contagion of death that daily I may be more and more certain of enjoying with Him life everlasting.

"O most amiable Saviour," exclaims St. Francis of Sales with this thought in mind, "what other food can give eternal life, but Thy Body? A living Bread was necessary to give life, a Bread which hath come down

from Heaven to give heavenly life, a Bread that was Thou Thyself, to give immortal and eternal life."

Holy Communion, moreover, makes me think of Heaven. I cannot eat worthily of this new Manna without being reminded of the place of its origin; I cannot receive devoutly the Celestial King without recalling the Home of His glory. The Eucharistic Bread is "as the first-fruits of that supersubstantial bread which will one day be given to us." By the fact, too, that our Divine Lord instituted this Holy Sacrament on the night before He died, during a solemn supper which He held, and at the close of day, I should be reminded, when receiving, of the everlasting banquet He will give me when the evening comes and my work is done.

"Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord: or who shall stand in His Holy Place?" the Psalmist asks. Then straightway answering says: "The innocent in hands and clean of heart, who hath not taken his soul in vain, nor sworn deceitfully to his neighbor." Those then who would enter Heaven must be blameless in thought and word and deed. But how shall I more easily secure the light and strength I need for thus ordering my life than

by going to Communion every day? Heaven is the guerdon of virtue and holiness. But nothing shall make clearer and easier the path of rectitude and sanctity than frequent Communion. "For this most high and precious Sacrament," says Kempis, "is the health both of soul and body, the medicine for all spiritual languor; hereby my vices are cured, my passions bridled, my temptations overcome or at least weakened, greater grace infused, virtue increased, faith confirmed, hope strengthened, and love inflamed and enlarged." If I now seek life every day at the Table of the Eternal, I shall surely be among the Blessed who eat bread in the Kingdom of God forever.

Moreover, by kneeling every morning at the altar-rail, I practice daily all the Beatitudes. Consequently in the life to come I shall merit their rewards. I receive in poverty of spirit for I know my unworthiness, therefore the Kingdom of Heaven will be mine; I receive in meekness for I pardon all who wrong me, therefore I shall possess "the land of the living"; I receive sorrowing for my sins, therefore I "shall be comforted in Jerusalem"; I receive with a great hunger after justice, therefore I shall be given "to eat of

the Tree of Life which is in the Paradise of my God"; I receive moved by mercy for my own soul, therefore in Heaven God's mercy shall be shown me, "good measure and pressed down, shaken together and running over"; I receive to keep my heart clean, therefore my "eyes shall see the King in His beauty"; I receive to be at peace with all men, therefore I "shall sit in the beauty of peace and in the tabernacles of confidence and in wealthy rest"; I receive to be patient under trial and contradiction, therefore "everlasting joy" shall be on my head and in God's Kingdom I shall dwell securely without fear. Truly will it be said of me, "He asked life of Thee: and Thou hast given him length of days for ever and ever."

Daily therefore will I "seek God" at the altar that my soul may "live". As communicants in St. Augustine's time would say, "I will go every morning to the Life." Never may my Saviour have occasion to repeat to me the reproach He once uttered to the Jews: "You will not come to Me that you may have life." Let me always remember rather that "those who keep away from Thee shall perish," and that I may shun the remotest danger of such a disaster let me but keep His "word" as it

comes to me through His earthly Vicar's Decree on daily Communion, and in accordance with His promise I "shall not taste death"; for is not Jesus "the Resurrection and the Life"? Therefore what I am to receive forever in Heaven let me here receive daily. As often as I partake of this Bread of Angels may I become less dim-sighted and gross-minded, but rather,

"Feel through all this earthly dress
Bright shoots of everlastingness,"

that will keep me ever in mind of my high destiny.

By communicating every morning I shall grow, as the days and years go by, better and better prepared to "come to Mount Sion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem and to the company of many thousands of Angels, and to the Church of the first-born who are written in the heavens and to God the Judge of all and to the spirits of the just made perfect and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Testament"; when faith shall pass into vision, hope shall see fulfilment and charity shall find fruition; when death shall be no more, nor night, nor sorrow, nor any shadow

of turning; when God shall wipe away all tears from my eyes; when clad in shining robes of white I shall be led to the Waters of Life; when I shall celebrate eternally the Marriage of the Lamb and "eat and drink" in the banquet halls of God, because it was my wont, while a sojourner here, to go daily to the King's Table.

EPILOGUE

THE practice of daily Communion numbers among its blessings great facility in securing the means of completely freeing ourselves, even every morning perhaps, from the temporal punishment our sins have merited. For by a decree of Pope Pius IX, dated July 31, 1854, any one who, after worthily receiving the Holy Eucharist, recites before a representation of Jesus Crucified, the *"En Ego"* and prays for the intentions of the Holy Father, may gain a plenary indulgence. The picture opposite page 152, of our Divine Lord in the mystical wine press, will serve for a Crucifix, the "Our Father," the "Hail Mary," and the "Glory be to the Father," repeated five times may be said for the object dearest to the heart of the Supreme Pontiff, and here is the prayer:

"Look down upon me, good and gentle Jesus, while before Thy face I humbly kneel, and with burning soul pray and beseech Thee to fix deep in my heart lively sentiments of faith, hope and charity, true contrition for my sins, and a firm purpose of amendment; the while I contemplate with great love and tender

pity Thy five wounds, pondering over them within me, whilst I call to mind what the Prophet David put in Thy mouth concerning Thee, O good Jesus: 'They have dug My hands and My feet; they have numbered all My bones.'" *Ps. XXI,* 17, 18.

As the best argument after all that can be urged for daily Communion, and the most moving appeals that can be made in behalf of the practice are contained in the decree *Sacra Tridentina Synodus,* that Pius X issued on the 20th of December, 1905, how can the talks on "Our Daily Bread" and these papers about "The King's Table" be better ended and summarized than by appending the following translation of that admirable document?

Decree on Daily Communion.

The Council of Trent, having in view the unspeakable treasures of grace which are offered to the faithful who receive the Most Holy Eucharist, makes the following declaration: "The holy Synod would desire that at every Mass the faithful who are present should communicate, not only spiritually, by way of internal affection, but sacramentally, by the actual reception of the

Eucharist" (Sess. XXII, cap. 6). Which words declare plainly enough the wish of the Church that all Christians should be daily nourished by this heavenly banquet, and should derive therefrom abundant fruit for their sanctification.

And this wish of the Council is in entire agreement with that desire wherewith Christ our Lord was inflamed when He instituted this Divine Sacrament. For He Himself more than once, in no ambiguous terms, pointed out the necessity of eating His Flesh and drinking His Blood frequently, especially in these words: "This is the bread that cometh down from heaven; not as the fathers did eat manna and are dead: he that eateth this bread shall live forever" (John vi, 59). Now, from this comparison of the food of the angels with bread and with the manna, it was easily to be understood by His disciples that, as the body is daily nourished with bread, and as the Hebrews were daily nourished with manna in the desert, so the Christian soul might daily partake of this heavenly bread, and be refreshed thereby. Moreover, whereas in the Lord's Prayer we are bidden to ask for "our daily bread," the holy Fathers of the Church all but unanimously teach that by these words

must be understood, not so much that material bread which is the support of the body as the Eucharistic bread which ought to be our daily food.

Moreover, the desire of Jesus Christ and of the Church that all the faithful should daily approach the sacred banquet is directed chiefly to this end, that the faithful being united to God by means of the Sacrament, may thence derive strength to resist their sensual passions, to cleanse themselves from the stains of daily faults, and to avoid those graver sins to which human frailty is liable; so that its primary purpose is not that the honor and reverence due to our Lord may be safeguarded, or that the Sacrament may serve as a reward of virtue bestowed on the recipients (St. Augustine, Serm. 57 in St. Matth., "De Orat. Dom." No. 7). Hence the holy Council of Trent calls the Eucharist "the antidote whereby we are delivered from daily faults and preserved from deadly sins" (Sess. XIII, cap. 2).

This desire on the part of God was so well understood by the first Christians that they daily flocked to the Holy Table as to a source of life and strength. "They were persevering in the doctrine of the Apostles and in the communication of the breaking of bread" (Acts

ii, 42). And that this practice was continued into later ages, not without great fruit of holiness and perfection, the holy Fathers and ecclesiastical writers bear witness.

But when in later times piety grew cold, and more especially under the influence of the plague of Jansenism, disputes began to arise concerning the dispositions with which it was proper to receive Communion frequently or daily; and writers vied with one another in imposing more and more stringent conditions as necessary to be fulfilled. The result of such disputes was that very few were considered worthy to communicate daily and to derive from this most healing Sacrament its most abundant fruits, the rest being content to partake of it once a year, or once a month, or at the utmost weekly. Nay, to such a pitch was rigorism carried that whole classes of persons were excluded from a frequent approach to the Holy Table; for instance, those who were engaged in trade, or even *those who were living in the state of matrimony.*

Others, however, went to the opposite extreme. Under the persuasion that daily Communion was a divine precept, and in order that no day might pass without the

reception of the Sacrament, besides other practices contrary to the approved usage of the Church, they held that the Holy Eucharist ought to be received, and in fact administered it, even on Good Friday.

Under these circumstances the Holy See did not fail in its duty of vigilance, for by a decree of this Sacred Congregation, which begins with the words *Cum ad aures,* issued on February 12, A. D. 1679, with the approbation of Innocent XI, it condemned these errors and put a stop to such abuses, at the same time declaring that all the faithful of whatever class—merchants or tradesmen or married persons not excepted—might be admitted to frequent Communion, according to the devotion of each one and the judgment of his confessor. And on December 7, 1690, by the decree of Pope Alexander VIII, *Sanctissimus Dominus,* the proposition of Baius, postulating a perfectly pure love of God, without any admixture of defect, as requisite on the part of those who wished to approach the Holy Table, was condemned.

Yet the poison of Jansenism, which, under the pretext of showing due honor and reverence to the Holy Eucharist, had infected the minds of even good men, did not entirely dis-

appear. The controversy as to the dispositions requisite for the lawful and laudable frequentation of the Sacrament survived the declarations of the Holy See; so much so, indeed, that certain theologians of good repute judged that daily Communion should be allowed to the faithful ones in rare cases and under many conditions.

On the other hand there were not wanting men of learning and piety who more readily granted permission for this practice, so salutary and so pleasing to God. In accordance with the teachings of the Fathers, they maintained that there was no precept of the Church which prescribed more perfect dispositions in the case of daily than of weekly or monthly Communion; while the good effects of daily Communion would, they alleged, be far more abundant than those of Communion received weekly or monthly.

In our own day the controversy has been carried on with increased warmth, and not without bitterness, so that the minds of the confessors and the consciences of the faithful have been disturbed, to the no small detriment of Christian piety and devotion. Accordingly, certain distinguished men, themselves pastors of souls, have urgently besought His Holiness

Pope Pius X to deign to settle, by his supreme authority, the question concerning the dispositions requisite for daily Communion; so that this usage, so salutary and so pleasing to God, might not only suffer no decrease among the faithful, but might rather be promoted and everywhere propagated—a thing most desirable in these days, when religion and the Catholic faith are attacked on all sides and the true love of God and genuine piety are so lacking in many quarters. And His Holiness, being most earnestly desirous, out of his abundant solicitude and zeal, that the faithful should be invited to partake of the sacred banquet as often as possible, and even daily, and should profit to the utmost by its fruits, committed the aforesaid question to this Sacred Congregation to be looked into and decided once for all (*definiendum*).

Accordingly the Sacred Congregation of the Council, in a Plenary Session, held on December 16, 1905, submitted the whole matter to a very careful scrutiny; and after sedulously examining the reasons adduced on either side, determined and declared as follows:

1. Frequent and daily Communion, as a thing most earnestly desired by Christ our Lord and by the Catholic Church, should be

open to all the faithful, of whatever rank and condition of life; so that no one who is in the state of grace, and who approaches the Holy Table with a right and devout intention, can lawfully be hindered therefrom.

2. A right intention consists in this: that he who approaches the Holy Table should do so, not out of routine, or vainglory, or human respect, but for the purpose of pleasing God, or being more closely united with him by charity, and of seeking this divine remedy for his weakness and defects.

3. Although it is most expedient that those who communicate frequently or daily should be free from venial sins, especially from such as are fully deliberate, and from any affection thereto, nevertheless it is sufficient that they be free from mortal sin, with the purpose of never sinning in future; and if they have this sincere purpose, it is impossible but that daily communicants should gradually emancipate themselves even from venial sins and from all affection thereto.

4. But whereas the Sacraments of the New Law, though they take effect *ex opere operato*, nevertheless produce a greater effect in proportion as the dispositions of the recipient are better, therefore care is to be taken that Holy

Communion be preceded by serious preparation and followed by a suitable thanksgiving, according to each one's strength, circumstances and duties.

5. That the practice of frequent and daily Communion may be carried out with greater prudence and more abundant merit, the confessor's advice should be asked. Confessors, however, are to be careful not to dissuade any one (*ne quemquam avertant*) from frequent and daily Communion, provided that he is in a state of grace and approaches with a right intention.

6. But since it is plain that by the frequent or daily reception of the Holy Eucharist union with Christ is fostered, the spiritual life more abundantly sustained, the soul more richly endowed with virtues, and an even surer pledge of everlasting happiness bestowed on the recipient, therefore parish priests, confessors and preachers—in accordance with the approved teaching of the Roman Catechism (Part II, cap. 4, N. 60)—are frequently, and with great zeal, to exhort the faithful to this devout and salutary practice.

7. Frequent and daily Communion is to be promoted, especially in religious Orders and Congregations of all kinds; with regard to

which, however, the decree *Quemadmodum*, issued on December 17, 1890, by the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, is to remain in force. It is also to be promoted especially in ecclesiastical seminaries, where students are preparing for the service of the altar; as also in all Christian establishments, of whatever kind, for the training of youth.

8. In the case of religious institutes, whether of solemn or simple vows, in whose rules, or constitutions, or calendars Communion is assigned to certain fixed days, such regulations are to be regarded as *directive* and not *preceptive*. In such cases the appointed number of Communions should be regarded as a minimum, and not as setting a limit to the devotion of the religious. Therefore, freedom of access to the Eucharistic table, whether more frequently or daily, must always be allowed them, according to the principles above laid down in this decree. And in order that all religious of both sexes may clearly understand the provisions of this decree, the Superior of each house is to see that it is read in community, in the vernacular, every year within the octave of the Feast of Corpus Christi.

9. Finally, after the publication of this

decree, all ecclesiastical writers are to cease from contentious controversies concerning the dispositions requisite for frequent and daily Communion.

All this having been reported to His Holiness Pope Pius X by the undersigned Secretary of the Sacred Congregation in an audience held on December 17, 1905, His Holiness ratified and confirmed the present decree and ordered it to be published, anything to the contrary notwithstanding. He further ordered that it should be sent to all local ordinaries and regular prelates, to be communicated by them to their respective seminaries, parishes, religious institutes and priests; and that in their reports concerning the state of their respective dioceses or institutes they should inform the Holy See concerning the execution of the matters therein determined.

Given at Rome, the 20th day of December, 1905.

✠ VINCENT,
CARD. BISHOP OF PALESTRINA,
Prefect.

L. ✠ S. CAJETAN DE LAI,
Secretary.